Spring 2015

Evaluating contested ground: Civil War interpretation in the Shenandoah Valley

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Evaluating Contested Ground: Civil War Interpretation in the Shenandoah Valley

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An Honors Program Project Presented to

the Faculty of the Undergraduate

College of Arts and Letters

James Madison University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

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May 2015

Accepted by the faculty of the Department of History, James Madison University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Honors Program.

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PUBLIC PRESENTATION This work is accepted for presentation, in part, at the Colonial Academic Alliance Undergraduate Research Conference on March 29th, 2015.

Dedication

To all future public historians who, like myself have strived to make sense of the Civil War landscape.

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Acknowledgements

This work would not have been possible without the guidance, support, and expertise of the history department at James Madison University. Long conversations with Dr. Dillard aided in the development of my thoughts and ensured I said what I wanted to say. His guidance in this long process is immensely appreciated. Dr. Lanier's support in providing background readings on museum studies helped me frame my thoughts around the appropriate literature. It is thanks to Dr. Mulrooney's urging to make strong statements that my writing evolved to where it is today.

I would also like to thank all the interpretative managers at each of the three sites. Pamela Pampe, Troy Marshall and Dennis Frye. Their insight provided a crucial perspective to my work and their comments will allow readers to see the bigger picture of Civil War interpretation in the Shenandoah Valley.

My colleagues at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, Shannon Moeck and Eric Cambpell both helped me formulate my ideas. Their insights and conversations helped shape my ethereal ideas into concrete thoughts. Last and certainly not least, I would like to thank my girlfriend and fellow historian, Casey DeHaven. She has not only been my partner in visiting these sites, but was also a tremendous support during this whole process.

Introduction

The sesquicentennial cycle of the American Civil War is now in full swing. Both people interested in the War, and those who are just getting interested in this history are making their way to various special programs and events. When the public engages in these events, how are they learning about the Civil War? Through interpretive programs led by formally educated interpreters? The statistics do not suggest that. Are visitors reading monographs about the historical events related to the Civil War? Unfortunately, this is not how the majority of the public learns and digests information about the Civil War. The public is more likely to visit a historical site or Civil War battlefield for a small period of time than to pick up a three hundred page study on a certain topic. When visitors travel to these sites, their collective cultural memory of the Civil War often overpowers their rationale thought. Common comments such as "slavery was not the cause of the Civil War," and emphasizing only military actions are common place at Civil War sites. The question then presents itself. How is scholarly information disseminated to the public? One way sites attempt to educate the public is through interpretative exhibits in visitor or orientation centers. Civil War sites in the Shenandoah Valley are failing to reach a suitable level of inclusiveness in their interpretative settings.

To narrow down this study three historic sites in the greater Shenandoah Valley will be assessed. At each site three specific aspects of Civil War history will be examined. First, what cause(s) does the site attribute to the Civil War? Second, in what ways do sites present the story of Shenandoah Valley civilians during the war? Lastly, does each site make an effort to interpret the complexities of post-war American society? Evaluating these three topics at each site is designed to keep research methods consistent.

These three questions will be applied to the interpretative displays at three Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley: The Virginia Museum of the Civil War located at the New Market Battlefield, The Kernstown Battlefield Association's Visitor center, and The Master Armorer's House at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Collectively these three sites were chosen for specific reasons. First, each site lies in the same cultural and geographical area, the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. Second, each site is owned and administered by a different kind of governing organizations, ranging from a federally funded site, to a state run site and a non-profit organization. At each site the interpretative displays reflect organizational structure.

Many other questions were considered when assessing these various display. Who wrote the text for the displays? How effectively is content organized? How are primary sources used in conjunction with current scholarly thought? How inclusive versus exclusive are the displays? How do these displays fit into each organization's mission statement? Are the displays current or out dated? If so, what interpretative problem(s) does this bring? Are there institutional biases built into the displays? These questions represent a sample of the types of inquiries raised.

The primary source at each site was the exhibit and interpretative displays themselves. Besides photos and field notes the author interviewed an employee at each site who was responsible for the content on display. Before the interviews a list of standardized questions were put together and asked during each interview. Troy Marshall, Site Director at Virginia Museum of the Civil War at New Market was chosen because of his role in shaping current interpretation at the site. Pam Pampe, volunteer Curator and head of Visitor center operations at the Kernstown Battlefield Association was picked because of her active role in the organizations interpretative efforts. Finally, Dennis Frye, Chief of Interpretation at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

was interviewed because of his tenure at the park. All interviews and site visits were conducted during the summer and fall of 2014.

It is important that these sites place appropriate emphasis on certain aspects of Civil War history. It is their duty as historical organizations to present history in an ethical manner. However it can be suspected that each of these three sites will present the history of the Civil War differently. The Virginia Museum of the Civil War has different directives and intentions than the National Park Service at Harpers Ferry. It can be suspected that Kernstown Battlefield will lack certain professionalism because of its organizational structure as a non-profit. How does the status of a non-profit effect its interpretation? Harpers Ferry will have exhibits that attempt to cover a large breadth of history. Since it is a federally administered site how does the stance of the government reveal itself? A great example of this is to study how slavery and Emancipation are tied into the Harpers Ferry's interpretation compared to the two other sites.

Several important conclusions emerged from this research. From careful examination of the exhibits, personal interviews, and synthesizing this information, it is clear that each site needs to reassess what it is doing. At the same time, each site also does some things well. The sesquicentennial of the Civil War nears an end, and with that comes a lack of excitement and enthusiasm for the Civil War. This is an abrupt change of tide for what most Civil War sites have been experiencing in the last five years. As the nation looks forward to the next fifty years, how can the Civil War community keep this enthusiasm and attract more visitors? One-way maybe to shift interpretation away from military actions and more towards the greater social implications of the Civil War. By encouraging and engaging in a wider audience, hopefully a larger constituency would see utility at each site. In order to do this, Civil War sites need to properly

interpret the civilian experiences during the Civil war, illustrate how slavery led to secession, and acknowledge the difficulties the nation faced after 1865.

A note on modern Civil War historiography is required to frame this research. No subject in American history has been so aptly covered by American historians than the Civil War. Veterans beginning shortly after the war published unit histories and memoirs from their perspectives. Historians since for better or worse have continued to chronicle military campaigns, specific battles, generals, the politics of the Civil War, slavery and the social impact on the home front. The Shenandoah Valley is often overlooked in greater Civil War historiography. It was not until recently that historians have given it the proper attention. For overviews on the military campaigns see, *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1862* and *The Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864,* both anthologies are edited by Gary Gallagher.

The most current and best monograph on the Battle of New Market is by Charles Knights, *Valley Thunder: The Battle of New Market and the Opening of the Shenandoah Valley Campaign, May 1864.* Military actions on the Kernstown Battlefield have seen extensive research and publication, primarily because of its role in Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's 1862 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. For an in-depth study on the First Battle of Kernstown, see *We are in for it: The First Battle of Kernstown, March 23rd, 1862* written by Gary Ecelbarger. Unfortunately there is no standalone monograph covering the Second Battle of Kernstown. Scott Patchan devotes two chapters in his study, *Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign.* Harpers Ferry has an extensive cannon of historical writing associated with its role during the Civil War ranging from John Brown to its role in the Antietam Campaign, including *Six Years of Hell: Harpers Ferry in the Civil War,* by Chester Hearn. For a readable concise study of its overall role during the war, see *Harpers Ferry Under Fire: A Border Town in the*

Civil War by Dennis Frye. Even with its numerous illustrations and photographs Frye provides a succinct history of the town.

Recently historians have moved past retelling the story of battles and campaigns to examine broader aspects of the Civil War. Historians such as David Blight in his noted monograph, *Race and Reunion* examined the role race played between whites and African-Americans during reconstruction and Jim Crow America. Scholars have also turned their attention to Americans and their relationships to battlefields. Edward Linenthal broke ground in his book, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields*. Historians such as PaulSchakel have moved beyond certain battlefields have begun to study role the Civil War has in American memory. See his studies, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration and the Post-Bellum Landscape,* and *Archaeology and Public Memory: Public History and a National Park.* Currently Civil War historians have devoted time and researching certain battlefields and their histories themselves. Paul Schakel and Teresa S. Moyer tackle the creation of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in, *The Making of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Devil, Two Rivers and a Dream.* Jennifer Murray chronicles the history of Gettysburg National Military Park and the role of the Federal Government shaping public history in her recent publication, *On a Great Battlefield: The Making, Management, and Memory of Gettysburg National Military Park, 1933–2012.* Historian Kirk Savage examines the cultural landscape of Civil War commemoration in *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War and Monument in Nineteenth Century America.* Author Christian Spielvogel explores the rhetoric of National Park Service interpretation in *Interpreting Sacred Ground: The Rhetoric of National Civil War Parks and Battlefields.* To begin to get an insight on how slavery is portrayed in public history see *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory.*

Literature associated with muesology is diverse and extensive. Published by the American Association of Museums, *National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums* provides broad ethical guidelines on what the function of a museum should be and what that looks like. *Museum Administration* by Hugh Geneoways and Lynne M. Ireland acts as a handbook for museum professionals and provides the nuts and bolts to running a museum. Complimenting this piece is *The Manual of Museum Exhibitions* authored by Barry Loyd and Gail Dexe Loyd. Examining interpretative displays and labels, Beverly Serrells sheds light on interpretative exhibits in her work, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretative Approach.*

Chapter One: Three Distinct Civil War Sites in the Shenandoah Valley

The Shenandoah Valley is located on the western edge of modern day Virginia. Defined by the Shenandoah River, Allegany and Blue Ridge mountains, the Valley draws visitors for many reasons. Some travel to see the scenic roads and fall foliage. Others travel along the historic Valley Turnpike experiencing small town America as they traverse the historic landscape. A large majority of people traveling in the Shenandoah Valley travel to experience its Civil War history and visit Civil War battlefields. Nearly 150 years after its conclusion public history institutions throughout the Valley act as stewards to sensitive landscape and educators for visitors yearning for Civil War history. There are numerous sites that do this in the length of the Valley. There are those that deserve special attention: New Market State Historical Park, Kersntown Battlefield Association, and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. All three lie within the geographical and cultural boundaries of the Shenandoah Valley, and all interpret the American Civil War. In order to understand certain motives, initiatives, and interpretations, a sketch of each sites organizational structure and history must be drawn.

The New Market State Historical Park is located in New Market, Virginia. Through the efforts of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Virginia Military Institute (VMI), this partnership preserves a crucial battlefield landscape, and houses a museum dedicated to interpreting the Civil War in Virginia. When compared to the formation of other historic sites such as Mount Vernon, or Gettysburg, the preservation of New Market was not lead by a group or groups of people; rather it was one man, George Collins who began preservation in the 1940s.

A chief feature of the New Market Battlefield is the Bushong Farm. Following the Civil War the farm was sold out of the family by the 1940s. In 1944 a Virginia Military Institute

alumnus George Collins purchased the Bushong Farm. This began the intricate and close relationship between the site and VMI located 84 miles south.[1] When Collins passed away in 1964, he left the property and the Bushong Farm of 175 acres to VMI. Collins was a wealthy man and his economic achievements enabled him to leave an endowment for the site. The three million dollar endowment was, "to be used as a trust to perpetuate and maintain as a memorial of the Battle of New Market and to place improvements thereon for educational purposes."[2]After viewing Collins's will a reporter from Roanoke elaborated on this gift, "It is especially fitting that his gift should be accepted by the Institute during the period of the Civil War Centennial…Mr. Collins' gift insured permanency of the battlefield as a historic shrine, to be visited and appreciated by Virginian, cadet and tourist."[3] This initial preservation effort, led by one man put the New Market Battlefield on the path for preservation and future education efforts at the battlefield.

The park's nearly 300 acres provide an area for visitors to explore the history of the Battle of New Market. What stands today is a manicured battlefield containing replica artillery pieces, cultural landscapes, and a museum. The museum entitled, "The Virginia Museum of the Civil War" showcases items from the Civil War tied to Virginia, and VMI. The use of the museum and interpretation at the museum will be focused on in subsequent chapters. The second floor of the Virginia Museum of the Civil War is "The Hall of Valor." When visitors first arrive, the museum is the first thing they see. A large round building buttressed by steel supports in the

[1] During the Battle of New Market on May 15th 1864, Confederates forces under Maj. Gen. John C. Breckenridge contained the Corps of Cadets from V.M.I. 257 Cadets fought during the battle, and ten were killed, while 57 were wounded. This forged a bond between the institution in Lexington and the battlefield in New Market. The school and current cadets actively utilizes the historic landscape in the form of; funding museum operations and holding annual events for incoming cadets.
[2]*Richmond Times-Dispatch*, December 9th, 1964.
[3]*Roanoke World News*, December 11th, 1964.

shape of muskets highlights the battlefield as visitors exit their vehicles. The park's website describes the building, "The museum was dedicated in 1970 as a monument with its metal drum-like rotunda and stylized rifles leaning against it. Inside is a red carpet representing sacrifice and a graceful ramp signifying the forward motion of the VMI Cadets charging up Bushong's Hill."[4] The park also contains cultural resources in tandem with the museum proper. The Bushong Farm is a witness structure that was there before, during, and after the Civil War. The farm is used for interpretative programs to demonstrate Shenandoah Valley life from 1858-1868.[5] The farm is in working condition and provides another level of interpretation besides the military perspective of the battle. On a regular day the park is open from 9-4:30 for visitor use, and has a ten dollar fee. The site accommodates nearly thirty thousand paying visitors a year.[6]

Funding for New Market is tied to numerous different avenues. First, the museum receives funding from the endowment left to the site by VMI alum George Collins. Secondly as a nonprofit institution, the museum competes for grants in the museum marketplace for research, operations, and infrastructure costs. Troy Marshall commented on how it was easier to get funding to get projects off the ground but harder to receive funding to keep that project operational in the coming years.[7] This insecurity in financial stability creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and makes it hard for long term planning. The museum also receives funding from the State of Virginia. Marshall commented that the funding does not come directly from the state, but rather through the auspice of VMI. As a state sponsored institute of higher learning

[4]"Virginia Museum of the Civil War," Virginia Military Institute Museum System, accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.vmi.edu/vmcw/Explore/10737428988/.
[5]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with the author, July 21, 2014.
[6]Troy Marshall, email correspondence with author, March 10, 2015.
[7]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with the author, July 21, 2014.

VMI receives funds from Virginia taxpayers. VMI has a series of three museums that it owns and operates, the VMI Museum located at the VMI campus in Lexington, the Stonewall Jackson House in Lexington, and the Virginia Museum of the Civil War and battlefield at New Market. The Director of this network of museums is Colonel Keith Gibson. Gibson oversees the operations at New Market State Historical Park and is Troy Marshall's direct supervisor. Since funding is tied directly to VMI, Marshall commented that interpretative endeavors need to be aligned with VMI's historical perspective in order to secure funding. Finally, the museum admission fees help fund operations at the site.[8]

The Kernstown Battlefield Association runs and administers the Kernstown Battlefield located just south of Winchester, Virginia. The Kernstown Battlefield Association formed as a 501 (c) corporation in 1996 to, "to acquire, preserve and interpret the Pritchard-Grim Farm as an historic resource."[9] In the following four years through fundraising, and receiving local and Federal preservation grants the Kernstown Battlefield Association amassed nearly three million dollars in hopeto obtain the property. In 2000 in cooperation with local banks, the association purchased nearly 315 acres of property for around four million dollars. This included the Pritchard-Grim House and key battlefield land pertaining to the battles of First and Second Kernstown. By 2003 all of the loans were paid off. The Kernstown Battlefield Association serves as the governing body of operations at the site. Board members contribute their time through volunteering, money through donations, and aid in the future planning of the site. There is not a paid staff member at the site. The absence of paid staff leads to a series of dilemmas relating to how the site operates.

[8] Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview by author, July 21, 2014; Institute Strategic Plan 2008, Virginia Military Institute, (Lexington: VMI, 2008): 14-15.
[9] "The KBA Story Preservation and Stewardship," The Kernstown Battlefield Association, accessed September 24, 2014, http://www.kernstownbattle.org/aboutthekba/thekbastory.html.

Without a paid staff the Kernstown Battlefield Association cannot keep the doors open to the site on a daily basis. Shortly after acquiring the property the association began to build a visitor center inside of a former farm building. The visitor center contains exhibits, objects, and interpretative panels telling the many stories associated with the property and the military actions during the Civil War. The visitor center is only open on Saturdays 10-4 and Sundays 1-5, May through October. There is no admittance fee to enter the exhibit space but visitors have plenty of opportunities to donate to the association. The Kernstown Battlefield sees nearly three thousand visitors a year.[10] Visitors to the Valley have a small window to visit the site that is being preserved.

Another drawback to the lack of a paid staff brings is a lack of professionalism. The Kernstown Battlefield Foundation serves as the governing body and is run by local amateur historians and citizens who have not been formally trained in the field of history orpublic history in academia.[11] However it is not to say this automatically labels them as detrimental to the site. When people run a museum without the proper knowledge of museum scholarship or appropriate interpretative techniques it is evident in their operations. Pam Pampe is a board member of the Kernstown Battlefield Association. Starting in the spring of 2014 she began to overhaul the sites visitor center. Pampe is a formally trained historian. She is the former outreach coordinator at the Museum of the Shenandoah Valley in Winchester, knowledgeable on American material culture,

[10] Pam Pampe, Volunteer Curator and head of Visitor Center Operations, email correspondence with author, March 10, 2015.
[11]The Kernstown Battlefield Association has a governing board of Officers and Directors. Their current President is Gary J. Crawford.

and a leading expert of historic quilts. Along with these duties, she has experience in curatorial work in a museum setting.[12]

Pam is desperately trying to bring a semblance of professionalism to the Visitor Center. She is cataloging items into Past-Perfect, re-organizing items in display cases, and actively seeking out new items. But the fact that she is not a paid employee from the site she cannot devote the proper time and energy needed. She has no financial incentive and is working on her own time to help the museum. Unfortunately this is not uncommon. Many local museums, battlefields, and house museums either have no budget, or have lost their budget to hire professional historians. Therefore these institutions relay heavily on volunteers to do the day-to-day work at a site.

This leads to a third problem with the operations at the Kernstown Battlefield Association: the use of volunteers. Anyone can volunteer at the site and conduct visitor services and conduct site interpretation. Volunteers attend an annual training seminar in the early spring. Following this training volunteers begin to man the visitor center.[13] On a regular day, a visitor visiting the Visitor center is greeted by a volunteer, oriented to the site, told about the walking trails, the Pritchard-Grim House, and the exhibits. The quality control of this is hard to gauge. But what can be ascertained is that a visitor visiting the site multiple timeswould get multiple versions of visitor services. Again this is not saying that the versions would generate a negative

[12] Pam Pampe, Volunteer Curator and head of Visitor Center Operations with the Kernstown Battlefield Association and serves on the KBA Board of Directors. Pam Pampe, interview by author, June 30, 2014.

[13]According the Kernstown Battlefield Association Volunteer Interpreter Handbook, "The Purpose of this community is to provide weekly manpower to staff the KBA Visitor Center, and to help create an informative, enjoyable visitor experience to the public areas of the Kernstown Battlefield. Visitors should be treated as you would guests in your home, with courtesy and an appreciation of their interest in our property."

experience for the visitor but the fact that they vary reflects the organizational structure of the Kernstown Battlefield Association.[14]

Arguably the largest entity practicing in the field of public history and interpretation in the United States is the National Park Service (NPS).[15] The NPS founded in 1916, administers over 400 National Parks in the United States.[16] This includes numerous Civil War battlefields, and cultural sites related to the Civil War.[17] Battlefields such as Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Antietam have become synonymous in the American vocabulary for generations. These battlefields are not managed by various states or non-profit organizations. Rather they fall under the control of the NPS, the Department of the Interior, and the United States federal government. When looking at the Shenandoah Valley, there are only two NPS sites dedicated to telling the story of the Civil War: first, Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park, located in Middletown, Virginia; second, is Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.[18]

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is located at the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac Rivers in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The park contains nearly 3,745 acres of land and accommodates nearly 250,000 visitors annually.[19] However this large National Park

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[14]Elizabeth Merritt, *National Standards and Best Practices for U.S. Museum* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2008), 40-46.
[15] From now hereafter, the National Park Service will be abbreviated to NPS
[16]"Frequently Asked Questions," The National Park Service, accessed November 11, 2014. http://www.nps.gov/faqs.htm, last accessed November 11, 2014.
[17] There are over 70 National Park sites related to the Civil War in America. See http://www.nps.gov/cwindepth/cwparks.html for a complete list.
[18] The author currently is a Park Ranger at Cedar Creek and Belle Grove National Historical Park. He decided not to evaluate interpretation at this park due to a conflict of interest.
[19]"Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Resource Assessment," National Parks Conservation Association (Washington D.C.: February, 2009).http://www.npca.org/about-us/center-for-park-research/stateoftheparks/harpers_ferry/HAFE-web.pdf

was not born overnight. At the end of the Civil War Harpers Ferry was still a bustling town. The Baltimore and Ohio Railroad passed right through, and the town itself sustained significant industry. With the advent of the automobile in the early 20th century more Americans were traveling to historic sites. One of these sites was Harpers Ferry. Harpers Ferry's rich history spans from the 18th century, through the Civil War, and the early 20th century. Famously connected to John Brown's raid in 1859, Harpers Ferry drew visitors vying to see where the famed slave insurrection failed. Also the placement of monuments in and surrounding the town attracted visitors alike.[20] One of the most attractive features of the park is its natural beauty and appearance of a 19th century historic town.[21]

By the early 1930s, locals were concerned with the increased traffic and visitation. Preservation efforts to save the towns cultural and natural resources began at this time. Local citizens such as Henry T. McDonald and Mary Mish became, "the backbone for preserving and commemorating Harpers Ferry."[22] McDonald was an avid local historian who worked strenuously in the 1920s and 1930s promoting Harpers Ferry's beauty and historical significance. He knew the utility of tourists traveling to the area. To encourage visitors to the area he placed roadside historical markers. McDonald's argument was that visitors would travel to the area and

[20] See Teresa S. Moyer and Paul A. Shackel, *The Making of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Devil, Two Rivers, and a Dream* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2007) for a comprehensive narrative on the history of the park.
[21]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has a distinct and colorful history. For the sake of this chapter, the author will not narrate the lengthy history. For a detailed study, see Teresa S. Moyer and Paul A. Shackel's work, *The Making of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Devil, Two Rivers, and a Dream.*
[22]Shackel and Moya 35.

then spend their money locally. McDonald also was a founding member of the Jefferson County Historical Society and lobbied the state legislature for preservation funds.[23]

Fueled by increased nationalism during World War II there was a national push to label and commemorate important American landscapes. Harpers Ferry was recognized as one of these sites when President Franklin D. Roosevelt created Harpers Ferry National Monument on June 30th, 1944 by signing Public Law 78-386. The law agreed, "to provide for the establishment of the Harpers Ferry National Monument through donations, not to exceed 1,500 acres."[24] After a name change, and nearly three decades Harpers Ferry National Historical Park would begin to receive federal appropriations in 1978.[25]

It should be noted that what visitors experience when visiting Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is directly shaped by the federal government's ability to fund National Parks. Unlike non-profits, but similar to state run historical sites, the ability to meet fiscal obligations is inherently tied to the federal government's ability to pass budgets and appropriations for National Park's. In recent years the NPS faced severe funding cuts through sequestration and government shutdowns.[26] National Parks can also seek additional funding through the process of applying for grants. One aspect of the park's interpretation has stayed constant for the last two and a half decades. That constant is Dennis Frye.[27]

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[23]Shackel and Moya 35.
[24]Shackel and Moya, 47.
[25]Shackel and Moya, 48.
[26]Recently sequestration was implemented in Fiscal Year 2013. Congress pushed through across the board budget cuts, cutting the budgets of park's by as much as 6%. NPS wide this totaled to nearly 153.4 million dollars. In the fall of 2013, when Congress could not pass a continuing resolution bill, funding the government, all National Parks closed for visitation.
[27]Dennis Frye is the Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. He began working for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park shortly after completing his B.A. in History

Dennis Frye is currently the Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. His work is seen in all the current museums, interpretative displays, and formal Ranger programs offered at the park. Frye is a formally trained historian, graduating from Shepherd College (now University) in the 1970s. Raised locally his love for the area's history is evident to anyone who has been in contact with him. Frye in the 1980s led the interpretative effort to shape interpretation to be more inclusive by adding exhibits on African-American history and Emancipation at Harpers Ferry.

Frye's fingerprints are on almost all of the current interpretative endeavors at the park. Working closely with the Harpers Ferry Center and other NPS branches, Frye has attempted to create a landscape that tells a more inclusive story than its earlier years. These efforts to present a story grounded in multiculturalism. Multiculturalism takes many forms. As authors Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland state, there are stark differences between internal and external multiculturalism. Internal multiculturalism is a term used to define how diverse museum workers are at certain site. In an attempt to bring about larger diversity, the National Park Service has been working to hire minority staff members and create a more inclusive workplace. External multiculturalism reveals itself through institutions use of public programing, exhibit space, and institution sponsored media. Museum professionals claim that by creating an atmosphere of inclusiveness, and reflecting your audience ethnographically this setting fosters critical dialogue.

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from Shepherd College in the 1970s.He has written extensively on the 1862 Maryland Campaign, spoke for numerous documentaries from PBS to the History Channel, and served as the Associate Producer of the film *Gods and Generals.* Active in battlefield preservation, Frye was one of the founding members and served as President of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites until he returned to the NPS in 1998.

Genoways and Ireland claim, "Genuine dialogue with the multicultural public and an effort to find common ground on issues are key to achieving a common understanding."[28]

The NPS has taken this idea and ran with it. At Harpers Ferry National Historical Park exhibits attempt to tell many different stories. How this is represented in museum space will be analyzed in chapter three. It should be noted that efforts to create a workforce steeped in multiculturalism plays a factor in how the organization operates. Compared to the other two sites, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is immensely aware of how diversity is portrayed. Some critics claim that these changes towards inclusiveness are issued in a top down manner. Since Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is part the NPS, their interpretation usually aligns itself along contemporary political lines.

In recent years one of the most vocal critics of NPS Civil War interpretation was an African-American Congressman from Illinois, Jesse Jackson Jr. In 2000 the NPS sponsored a symposium inviting historians and activists to evaluate how the NPS was managing Civil War Parks. This watershed conference would be etched forever in stone as *Rally on the High Ground: The National Park Service Symposium on the Civil War*.[29] Jackson's chief concern was how Civil War sites within the NPS were currently not interpreting slavery as the cause of the Civil War. As a congressman Jackson was able to insert language into the Department of the Interior's 2000 appropriation bill calling for an evaluation of Civil War sites. The language directed to the secretary of Interior Bruce Babbit stated in part, "to encourage Civil War battle sites to recognize and include in all of their public displays and multimedia educational presentations the unique

[28]Hugh Genoways and Lynne Ireland, *Museum Administration an Introduction* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2003), 315.
[29] Following the conference, the NPS published speeches from the event in a book known as, *Rally on the High Ground: The National Park Service Symposium on the Civil War,* ed. Robert Sutton (Fort Washington: Eastern National, 2001).

role that the institution of slavery played in causing the Civil War."[30] This was during a time when NPS Civil War sites were criticized for perpetuating the "Lost Cause" and martyrizing Confederate generals.[31] The conference held at Ford's Theatre in May of 2000 hosted some of the most well renowned Civil War historians. Scholars included, David Blight, Ira Berlin, James McPherson, Drew Gilpin Faust, Edward Linenthal, and Eric Foner.

For two days ideas and scholarship were shared all pertaining to how to interpret slavery at Civil War sites administered by the NPS. Outside of Civil War scholars Congressman Jesse Jackson Jr. spoke and gave his thoughts on the issue. Jackson's speech begins with speaking about his time visiting Civil War sites. During his visits to sites he recalled how Rangers said that they would not change their views on slavery unless an act of Congress made them. Jackson states, "So, less than one session later, I have given those folks their act of Congress. Now let me try to tell you my perspective once again. This time with the force of law."[32] Riddled with political rhetoric Jackson picked and chose certain historical events to exemplify his points. He wanted Civil War sites to connect their stories to present a more inclusive and comprehensive narrative of the Civil War, and address the fundamental issues and questions the nation faced during the 1860s and beyond. The zenith of his argument is grounded in the NPS taking a greater initiative in interpreting slavery. Jackson said, "In particular, the Civil War battlefields are often weak or missing vital information about the role that the institution of slavery played in causing the American Civil War."[33] Since Jackson was a member of the House Apparitions Committee

[30]Sutton, v.
[31] To this day, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park own and operate the farm where CSA Gen. Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson died in 1863. Known as the "Stonewall Jackson Shrine," this term shrine connotes a message of religious pilgrimage for a man who took arms up against the United States.
[32]Sutton, 2.
[33]Sutton, 4.

his words and thoughts could not be ignored by those in the Department of the Interior or NPS. The critical takeaway from is that NPS parks needed to to be more inclusive, and less exclusive in their interpretation at Civil War sites.

According to Dennis Frye Harpers Ferry National Historical Park had already been interpreting the wide scope of Civil War history before this mandate in the early 2000s. He claimed that with the town's connection to the John Brown Raid in 1859, and stories related to the all-black Storer College, staff could not ignore the issues of race and slavery. Frye mentioned that it was as early as the 1980s that the park began work on creating an exhibit space dedicated to the African-American experience in and around Harpers Ferry. Located in the lower town the, "Black Voices Museum" and "Storer College/Niagara Movement Museum" each attempt to shed light on the African-American experience in Harpers Ferry.[34]

Visitors visiting Harpers Ferry National Park today enter the park by first parking their vehicles in a parking lot separated from the exhibit space and museums in the Lower Town. Visitors pay ten dollars per car of visitors to enter the park. Once they park their vehicles visitors notice a lack of a traditional NPS visitor center. Instead a small building orients visitors to the structure of the park. This building contains no exhibit space but serves to orient visitors. They are told to travel on numerous shuttle busses that run from the parking lot to the Lower Town. Once visitors arrive at the Lower Town they are dropped off and left to explore on their own. After walking a couple hundreds of yards visitors will come across the Master Armorer's House.

[34]Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.

This space contains an information desk, orientation materials, and exhibit panels dedicated to orienting visitors to the parks historical significance.[35]

Each three of these sites has its own distinct history, preservation threats, and organizational structure. Each site's ability to operate efficiently and effectively as a public history institution reflects how the site is organized and administered. It also shows how diverse the field of public history can be. Not one of the three sties obtains funds the same way, has identical governing bodies, or interprets the same history. Each site is essentially doing the same thing, engaging with visitors on the diverse and layered history of the Civil War of the Shenandoah Valley through respected tangible resources. Now that an outline of each sites organization has been sketched, the next chapter will focus on the written rhetoric of each site how the agency's voice and message are portrayed, and examine whether the organizational structure presents any bias through their displays.

[35] This site that will be analyzed in future chapters for its written rhetoric, use of objects, label writing, and use of visitor space.

Chapter Two: Civil War Interpretative Pedagogy

For the last twenty years scholars and public historians have pointed to Civil War sites and critiqued their interpretation of the war. The common thread in these critiques is that Civil War sites are presenting interpretation that is too exclusive in nature. Interpretation often focuses only on battlefield maneuvers and ignores many of the social aspects of the conflict such as the institution of slavery. Historians such as Dwight Pictathley, David Blight, John Vlach and Gary Nash have written extensively on the role slavery should play at public history sites, including Civil War battlefields.[36] All argue for a greater representation of slavery and the role in American society. Paul Schakel wrote extensively on this subject and the place of race commemoration in memory and landscapes.[37] Scholars are not alone in calling for Civil War sites to include more than just battle narratives. The federal government called for greater contextual presentations of history at federally owned battlefield sites by the late 1990s. Former chief historian of the National Park Service Dwight Pitchaithley wrote simply, "Setting battles within social, political, and cultural context of their times is not only appropriate but essential."[38] Not all Civil War sites are run by the federal government. How do Civil War battlefields deal with the larger existential questions of the Civil War to frame site specific material around a larger narrative? For the last fifteen years that is exactly what the National Park Service has been attempting to accomplish. Civil War battlefields are no longer just a landscape to recount the bravery and honor of a Civil War soldier. No longer are battles singular events that took place in a vacuum in American history. But critical interpretation at Civil War sites is contested ground.

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[36] See *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory.* ed. James Oliver Horton and Lois Horton (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).
[37]Paul Shackel, *Memory in Black and White: Race, Commemoration, and the Post-Bellum Landscape* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2003).
[38]Horton, 179.

Different stakeholders have different motives and versions of history they wish to be portrayed. As public history organizations the Kernstown Battlefield Association, the Virginia Museum of the Civil War and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park hold the trust of the public in their hands. Seen by the public as museums their authority in presenting authentic history rises above teachers in the classroom.[39] In both academic and public history circles there is a clear consensus that all Civil War sites need to frame their interpretation around a larger meta-narrative of the Civil War. This meta-narrative should include historical context and content from beyond the battlefield. The Civil War is America's defining moment. Battlefields can tell the public much more than tactics and biographies of generals. By moving beyond the standard interpretation of military history at battlefields, public historians can reach a wider and more engaged public. This begs the question what should be interpreted at each battlefield site?

The tragic beauty of the Civil War lies in its ability to recount the human experience. Americans of all races, sexes, and occupations experienced the Civil War in various ways. It was not only soldiers who were affected during this trying time. Women at home were left with farms to tend to without husbands or sons. Enslaved African-Americans were presented with new, if sometimes unwelcome, responsibilities in the South following the Emancipation Proclamation. Soldiers experienced trauma on the battlefields that stayed with them years after the end of the conflict. In short, every person experienced the Civil War differently. This is why the Civil War resonates with the public still today. Visitors at sites can identify with numerous different experiences beyond just battlefield actions. Are visitors receiving this new more balanced, inclusive version of the past at these Shenandoah Valley Civil War sites?

[39] Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 21.

This chapter argues for a framework historical meta-narrative must be adopted at Civil War sites that moves interpretation beyond the battlefield. This framework places battlefields in the larger context of regional, state and national historical themes. Ideally this framework has three main tenets. First, each site should acknowledge slavery as the cause of the Civil War. Second, the interpretative endeavors should include narrative and stories of civilians, slaves, and women who did not bear arms during the war. Lastly, sites need to acknowledge the unanswered questions the nation faced following the conclusion of the Civil War.

The causes of the Civil War, specifically the institution of slavery, cannot be ignored but need to be shown as the lynchpin that began the secession crisis. Civil War sites need to acknowledge that the conflict did not emerge in a vacuum. Rather the nation had been on track for conflict since the signing of the Constitution. Public historians should frame their argument by reaching into the past and showing examples of how the nation attempted to deal with slavery. These include events such as the Compromise of 1850 and John Browns Raid on Harpers Ferry. To exemplify slavery as the cause for secession sites should use local primary sources, especially state secession documents. In these documents, most southern states place slavery as the "cornerstone" of the new Confederate nation.[40] The state of Mississippi clearly connected secession to slavery. The Mississippi ordinance of secession says, "Our position is

[40] See Kristin L. Gallas James Dewolf Perry, "Comprehensive Content and Contested Historical Narratives," in *Interpreting Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites*, eds. Kristin L. Gallas and James Dewolf Perry (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 1-16 for an introduction in how to introduce the interpretation of slavery at historic sites.

thoroughly identified with the institution of slavery-- the greatest material interest of the world."[41]

The second tenet of the proposed meta-narrative is the treatment of civilians, slaves, and the family unit during the Civil War. These stories should not replace the story of the battle but can complement them. There are two major ideas to this theory. First, men who went away to war left families and wives. How did they survive with a distinctly different family structure? How did the Civil War shape their experiences of everyday life even though they were not on the battlefields? Secondly, one must examine the treatment of civilians generally. An example of this is to explore how different cultural groups in varying socio-economic classes such as religious pacifists responded to the armed conflict. One might also examine how blacks and whites experienced the war differently. Despite modern day scholarship, much of the "Lost Cause" ideology suggests there was no suffering at home save what the Yankees did. Essentially the Civil War touched the whole nation, not simply soldiers on battlefields.

Besides critically examining slavery as the cause of the Civil war and recognizing the civilian story Civil War sites need to acknowledge the complexities of the post-Civil War landscape. Too often sites treat battles and campaigns as isolated incidents removed from the political and social trends of the times. Civil War sites need to acknowledge the ramifications the end of the Civil War brought to Americans. Modern historical scholarship adamantly says that the emancipation did not bring automatic equality for the former enslaved. Failed efforts at Reconstruction and subsequent Jim Crow laws disenfranchised African-Americans significantly

[41] "A Declaration of the Immediate Causes which Induce and Justify the Secession of the State of Mississippi from the Federal Union," last accessed April 1, 2015. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/19th_century/csa_missec.asp

despite the lofty ideals of the Emancipation Proclamation. Historians such as David Blight and Eric Foner look forward to the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement as the moment in time when legal equality was reached. Foner points to the Civil Rights movement when he writes, "Only in the 1950s and 1960s, when the edifice of racism began to crumble in the face of a massive popular challenge, did it become possible to begin to recover the full story of emancipation and Reconstruction and to understand their connections to our own time."[42] Civil War battlefields need to acknowledge this larger interpretation on site. It is a disservice to the public to present only the movements of troops during one day or one campaign. By presenting this one version of history, the site is implicitly saying this is the only interpretation that matters. Sites should make a conscious effort to incorporate the complexities of post-Civil War America. Topics such as Reconstruction, race relations, the Freedman's Bureau, the emergence of the New South, and reconciliation all present themselves as tangible themes connecting back to battlefields. Scholars have criticized the interpretation at Civil War sites for being too exclusive. As late as the 1990s, noted historian Dennis Frye gave a speech that stressed the bravery and honor of soldiers and the value of battlefields as a place to "teach moral courage."[43] Scholars of more recent past have questioned the interpretation presented my men such as Frye. One man leading this effort is the historian Paul Schakel. He responded to this speech and perspective strongly when he wrote a response, "Saying that battlefields are not a place to "study death" and "destruction" but rather are about learning "moral courage" and "the value of commitment" is a

[42]Eric Foner, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (New York: Random House, 2005), 225. Also see David Blight, *Race and Reunion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).
[43]Shackel, *Memory in Black and White*, 49.

way to depoliticize the meaning of the war. It does not allow for the American public to address the tough questions related to the Civil War, such as slavery and racism."[44]

The implementation of this meta-narrative interpretative theory is harder said than done and often receives push back from traditional military historians and some visitors. But the beauty of this idea is that if done correctly, visitors can use battlefields as centers for complex learning. Public historians can use the tangible cultural landscapes of battlefields to create connections to larger narratives. The interpretation of the Civil War is not just one single story of history. It is not just about the Emancipation Proclamation or battles and campaigns. However what the Civil War does is place the American experience on a pedestal. It is the public historian's duty to look at this experience from all angles and present the time period as a whole and explore its nuances.

Some will argue against this idea. One perspective is that visitors visit these sites to learn about one specific battle that was fought, hence the reason why these sites are preserved. By no means should this meta-narrative take way from specific historical site interpretation, but it should by all means complement it. Critical interpretation introduces the public to new ideas and encourages visitors to question what they already know. By including a larger narrative focusing on bigger themes, interpretation can move from one way didactic presentations of events towards including multiple perspectives and embracing controversies.[45]

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[44]Shackel, *Memory in Black and White*, 49.

[45] One site that has recently attempted this idea is the Gettysburg Museum at Gettysburg National Military Park. This large museum opened within the last decade. Inside curators attempt to tell the whole story of the Civil War through objects, touchscreens, and traditional text panels. The effectiveness of this museum rests in the faith it places in visitors spending ample time reading all the texts.

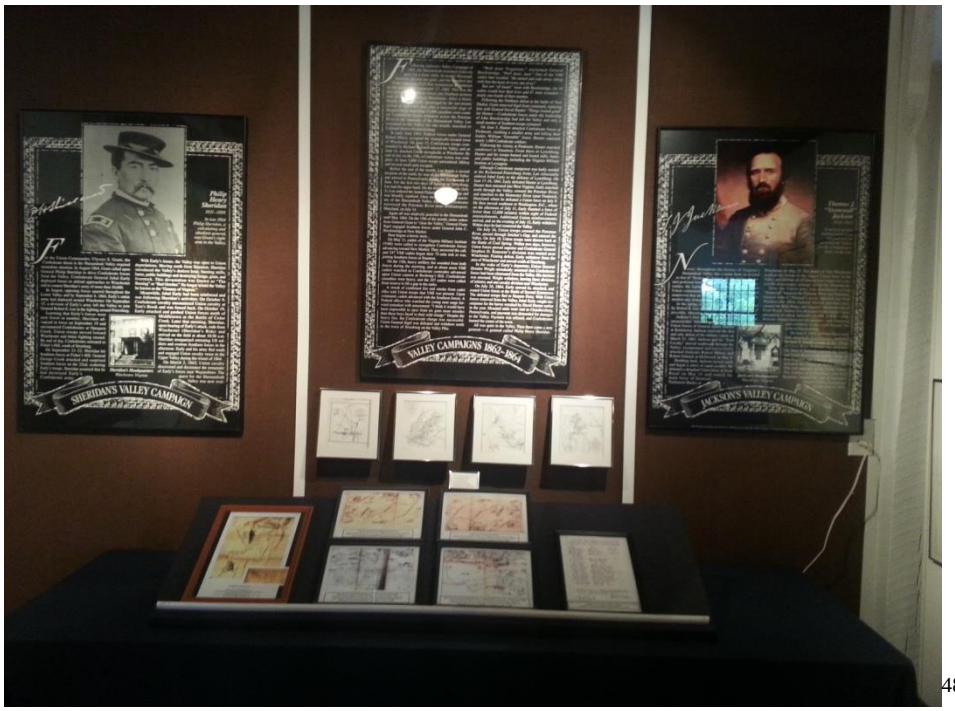
With this being said, the interpretation at each of these three sites should be examined to see where they fit into the ideas of the proposed meta-narrative right now in 2014. When critically examining these sites there were certain criteria used to frame the analysis. First each site's written interpretation was evaluated for readability. How was each site using language to convey historical themes and events? What level of reading are the texts? How long and to what extent is the interpretation focused on text? Secondly the author was looking for historical biases in written interpretation and the presentation of institutional messages. To what extent are regional or institutional biases presented when presenting information on the causes of the Civil War? To what extent is the institution of slavery discussed at each site? Are the messages being taken away different from the site's intent? The author was also examining how inclusive or exclusive their interpretation was at each site. Lastly the author was thinking about how these museum settings conformed or opposed the idea of the proposed meta-narrative. Complimenting oral interviews done with site directors responsible for shaping interpretation, photographic evidence was gathered and supplemented with notes taken during visits.

The Kernstown Visitor Center

The majority of the interpretive text at the Kernstown Battlefield can be found inside the Visitor Center adjacent to the battlefield's parking lot. Inside are exhibits and objects pertaining to the Civil War generally and the Battle(s) of Kernstown.[46] The interpretation inside the Visitor Center is done mostly through the use of interpretative text panels. There are no audio-visual or digital outlets for visitors. In this sense the space is very traditional.

[46] On the battlefield landscape, there are numerous interpretative waysides. These waysides follow the trail system and bring visitors to certain key spots on the battlefield. To contain the research the author did not analyze these, as they deserve their own scope of work.

The interpretation at the site is primarily concerned with military actions, focusing on the two major battles that were fought on the landscape. The first engagement was the Battle of First Kernstown that was fought on March 23, 1862 and began Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign. The second engagement was on July 24, 1864 with the Second Battle of Kernstown. This was the final Confederate victory in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864.[47] To prepare visitors with the historical context of these engagements three large text panels greet visitors:



[48]

The first impression visitors get when looking at these panels is the vast amount of text. Few professional curators today would place this volume of text in front of visitor's eyes, or commit

[47]See Gary L. Ecelbarger, *"We are in for it!" The First Battle of Kernstown* (Shippensburg: White Mane Publishing Co.: 2002); Scott Patchan, *Shenandoah Summer: The 1864 Valley Campaign* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Jonathan Noyalas, "Early's Costliest Victory The Second Battle of Kernstown and Its Impact on the Union Strategy in the Shenandoah Valley, 1864."*Winchester Frederick County Historical Society Journal* (Fall 2002).
[48]The Kernstown Battlefield Association, "Shenandoah Valley Campaigns" (museum exhibit), photograph taken by author, June 30, 2014.

solely to text based visitor interactions.[49] As a non-profit organization Kernstown Battlefield Association does not have a paid curator or exhibit designer in residence.[50] The text is intimidating and takes too long for most visitors to read. The historical narrative conforms to standard Civil War military history. Discussions of how the Shenandoah Valley fits into the larger war effort in Virginia are made clear after a close reading of the text.

Two separate spaces are dedicated to interpreting the two battles on their own. Accompanying maps and historical images at each space are 8 ½ x 11 pages of computer paper narrating the respective battle. The text is nearly the length of academic journal articles. During site visits the author observed visitors not spending time reading the text but rather scanned the images and graphics in their immediate front. The military analysis of each battle is not incorrect but is exhausting. The text contains military jargon and terms that only visitors versed in the vocabulary of Civil War combat can digest. An example of this is seen in a panel describing the Second Battle of Kernstown, "As the left of the Union line, advancing along Valley Pike, was flanked and rolled back by Breckenridge's troops, the Union right had become exposed and driven in. Ramseur's division poured in from the south and west causing the Union center to become concentrated at the stone wall in front of the Pritchard House."[51] If this is the interpretative direction the Kernstown Battlefield Association wants to take it would help to have a panel devoted to explaining certain military terms to visitors. More importantly, if the site

[49]Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretative Approach* (New York: AltaMira Press, 1996), 52.
[50] During the interview with Pam Pampe, she could not point to one person responsible for writing the texts. She made mention of how various board members and volunteers have contributed in some way.
[51]The Kernstown Battlefield Association, "The Battle of Second Kernstown" (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author, June 30, 2014.

wants to conform to current best practices, the site should be used to educate the public not only on the military actions at the site but also teach the public about the Civil War generally.

One issue the site needs to revisit immediately is their interpretation of the cause of the Civil War. The Visitor Center does not engage with the secession crisis or slavery. Military engagements are seen to occur within the context of the Civil War, but the larger framework of the Civil War is absent from the interpretative panels. Adding this layer of the meta-narrative would help visitors understand why these battles were fought from a larger perspective. It would be worthwhile to embrace the Pritchard House's history as a household unit and explore how this family responded to the idea of secession as well. Did they own slaves? How did they make a living? What was their family structure like and how was it threatened by the secession crisis and the coming of the Civil War? This information was conveyed in a personal interview with curator Pam Pampe. She noted that the site not only strives to interpret the military actions but also the many families that called the property home at some point. She did not want to focus on the one family that lived there during the war, but rather approach it from a more comprehensive view.[52] One text panel exemplifies this view when it reads, "The Pritchard House…1854 to present its History…and Hope for its Future."[53] This approach would create a landscape with a layered approach of history. If done correctly visitors would be greeted with history that moves beyond the battlefield.[54]

[52] Pam Pampe, Volunteer Curator and Head of Visitor Center, interview with author, June 30, 2014.
[53] The Kernstown Battlefield Association, "The Pritchard House" (museum exhibit), from Photograph taken by author
[54] See, James T. Nolan Jr. and Ty F. Buckman, "Preserving the Postmodern, Restoring the Past: The Cases of Monticello and Montpelier," *The Sociological Quarterly,* Vol. 39, No. 2 (Spring 1998): 253-269 for a case study in interpreting a postmodern historic house.

The Visitor Center interprets the civilian life by focusing on the Pritchard's. Fortunately for the Kernstown Battlefield Association and visitors to the battlefield today, their brick mansion still stands as a testament of their struggle. This tangible historical resource allows the association to tack between military history and the civilian story of the site very easily.[55] The fact that this is attempted at the site deserves attention. However historical sources and the narrative should be expanded through interpretative text so visitors can have a greater understanding of their experiences. Just like the other sites, Kernstown was a town before it became a battlefield. An inclusion of the village's experience during the war would provide necessary contextual information and add to the interpretation.

In the current exhibit spaces the interpretation is not guided nor does it contain a connective overreaching theme. The displays all relate to the landscape somehow. An example of this is seen through looking at how the site interprets post-Civil War America. Instead of interpreting the problems of Reconstruction, managers decided to look at a few select stories relating to the battlefield. An example of this is seen with a display dedicated to the story of Lieutenant James Nugent's wife.[56] After the war Nugent's wife attempted to find the body of her deceased husband. She petitioned locals for assistance with any information of the location of his death. This narrative is told through primary source evidence such as newspapers and pamphlets. Information connecting this story to the larger women's organizations after the war would tie nicely into the meta-narrative.

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[55] During the time of this research KBA was in the process of obtaining grants for the restoration of the Pritchard-Grim House. As of 2014 the house was in stable condition but could not open to the public regularly. With grant funding, hopes are that the house can be used as another interpretative outlet for visitors at the battlefield.

[56] Lieutenant Nugent was the nephew of the flamboyant Irishman Colonel James Mulligan. Mulligan died during the battle of Second Kernstown after seeing his nephew shot dead in front of him.

The interpretative plan at the Kernstown Visitor Center needs attention. The absence of any serious discussion of the Secession Crisis and slavery passively ignores the primary cause of the Civil War. Panels interpret the military actions inappropriately with too much textual information and too little effort to define the key points. Visitors can easily find themselves lost in a sea of military detail. Interpretation on the civilian experience needs to be expanded to include voices from the town of Kernstown and the Pritchard family. Attempts to interpret post-Civil War history are present, but these should be expanded to show how they exemplify larger national themes of the time.

Virginia Museum of the Civil War

The site where the organization's voice is heard the clearest through their interpretative text is the Virginia Museum of the Civil War at the New Market Battlefield. According to site manager Troy Marshall the site has two distinct themes: First, to interpret civilian life in the Shenandoah Valley from 1858-1868. Secondly, to interpret the role the VMI cadets played during the Battle of New Market.[57] Visitors entering the site would be surprised to learn that these are the only two themes managers actively focus on. The confusion might arise because the interpretative space inside the museum is not only dedicated to the Battle of New Market and civilian life but also to narrate the Civil War in Virginia from secession to Appomattox. The interpretation at New Market fails to acknowledge slavery as a root cause of the war, lacks current Civil War scholarship in exhibits, and does not explore the African-American experience during the Civil War.

[57]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with author, July 21, 2014.

Visitors at the site will notice the top story of the museum space dedicated to telling the story of the Civil War in Virginia. The first interpretative panel interprets the beginning of the Civil War and secession. As a product of the 1960s this panel follows standard "Lost Cause" rhetoric.[58] In short the cause of the Civil War is attributed to:

> For more than forty years the nation had been dividing. The issues were states' rights, slavery, and the conflicting goals of an industrial North and agricultural South. The question was: Would war come? The 1852 anti-slavery novel, "Uncle Tom's Cabin," helped unite sentiment in the North and to further alienate the two sections. Then in 1859, John Brown raided Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia), to insight a slave rebellion. It failed but the entire South shuddered at this violent threat.[59]

This is the standard "Lost Cause" interpretation attached to the beginning of the Civil War. According to this interpretation the South seceded because of an abolitionist threat and the election of Abraham Lincoln in 1860. Curiously enough the panel omits why the South did not approve of Lincoln. "The election of 1860 had been crucial, Republicans nominated Abraham Lincoln, whom the South vowed it would not accept."[60] Unfortunately this is not the only time "Lost Cause" rhetoric is seen in the interpretation. It is repeated at different points throughout.

[58] The "Lost Cause" is an ideological movement started shortly after the Civil War by ex-Confederates such as Jubal Early. In their writings the main tenants of this southern ideology are Robert E. Lee was the best general of the war on both sides, Confederate armies were outnumbered by northern forces and fought gallantly, U.S. Grant was a butcher, a drunk, and a terrible general, Stonewall Jackson was the second best general on either side and Virginia was the only important theater of the war. Moving beyond warfare, Lost Cause writers adamantly denied slavery as the cause of the war and argued that it was economic differences between North and South along with tariffs. This myth was perpetuated and often accepted in academic and popular history for nearly one hundred years after the war. Academic scholars since the 1970s have utterly rejected this thinking.

[59]The Virginia Museum of the Civil War, "A House Divided," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author November, 2014.

[60]The Virginia Museum of the Civil War, "A House Divided," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author November, 2014.

The most glaring example of this occurs after the interpretative panel covering the Battle of Antietam. After discussing the Confederate defeat at Antietam, the next panel consists of Abraham Lincoln with a small paragraph about the Emancipation Proclamation:

It is worth noting the entirety of the text shown in white:

> Lee's setback at Antietam had prompted Lincoln to use the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which was to take effect January 1, 1863. It proposed to free slaves in Confederate held territory. Britain and France, on the verge of recognizing the Confederacy, were now compelled by public opinion to withhold active support. The South's Hope for foreign aid-and victory-dimmed permanently."[61]

The panel shows an image of Abraham Lincoln with no context or exhibit label. No title accompanies the text informing visitors this is about the Emancipation Proclamation. This is symbolic in a sense. Rather than having information on the Emancipation Proclamation up front and center as most scholars today would argue for, this is tucked away in an alcove making it hard for visitors to see.

[61]The Virginia Museum of the Civil War, "No panel title," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author November 2014.

This is the only time the author noticed any attempt by the interpretation to include the experiences of African-Americans during the war. It is also the only time the Emancipation Proclamation is mentioned in the exhibit space covering the war in Virginia. When a site does not recognize slavery as the cause of the Civil War it makes sense that the subject of the Emancipation Proclamation would not be given due space. To fit into the proposed meta-narrative the site needs to change their interpretation to include slavery as the cause of the Civil War.[62] If the site is dedicated to interpreting the Civil War in Virginia they also need to actively engage with the complexities of the Emancipation Proclamation and what this meant for African-Americans in Virginia.

Visitors moving to the lower floor of interpretative space will experience exhibits devoted to one of two things: interpretation of the Battle of New Market or VMI cadets in general. The voice of the institution can be observed by reading the labels in this section. The VMI Cadets are made into heroes for their role at the Battle of New Market. VMI still actively uses the landscape for the annual new rats'[63] cadet oath. Occurring in the fall of their first year, cadets travel from Lexington to New Market commemorating the same march the corps made in 1864. Rats take the new cadet oath on the battlefield and will physically charge across the battlefield following in the footsteps of their predecessors. Following this action the rats are officially sworn in as a Cadet of VMI. This ceremony connects cadets with a specific historic landscape and a specific view of Confederate and VMI past.

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[62] During an interview with Troy Marshall, he acknowledged the antiquity of the exhibits. He is attempting to come up with plans to create a space that acknowledges slavery and presents a more inclusive narrative. Candidly, he said there is only so much he can do interpretively because of the organization's relation to VMI. Marshall noted that staff at VMI are happy with the interpretation and do not want to over haul the interpretation.

[63] First year VMI cadets are called rats.

The Hall of Valor located on the lower floor in the Virginia Museum of the Civil War is exactly as the name suggests. It serves the public in educating them about the role of the VMI cadets during the Battle of New Market, not the Battle of New Market from a tactical sense. But it also serves a larger purpose for VMI and its students and alumni. The site serves as a pilgrimage site for new cadets to pay homage to former cadets. This pilgrimage solidifies new recruits around shared values and experiences. Also many of the objects interpreted are from the Confederate or VMI past. The interpretation that accompanies these objects often seems to suggest religious connotations with modern day relics. A textbook example of this object fetishism is a case containing original remnants of the flag carried by the VMI cadets during the battle. More overt examples of creating a sacred landscape are seen in two separate texts. First, there is a prominent title label that reads New Market "A Field of Honor." The values being perpetuated by the institution are clearly noted as "honor". A second example is a map of the Shenandoah Valley. Right above New Market is a large red arrow that reads in part, "Armies met on this site…where this Memorial now stands."[64] The language and conscious use of "memorial" brings many other meanings to people. A simple "you are here" arrow would have sufficed. But the institution made a certain choice to insert this rhetoric for certain reasons. They want Virginians and the wider public to acknowledge the sacrifices the VMI cadets made here in 1864. The site has "undertaken the process of site sacralization."[65]

The Hall of Valor at New Market interprets the civilian and post war experiences of civilians in the Shenandoah Valley through the lens of the Bushong Family and Eliza Clinedinst

[64]The Virginia Museum of the Civil War, "New Market….A Field of Honor," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author November, 2014.
[65]Seth C. Bruggeman, *Here, George Washington Was Born: Memory, Material Culture, and the Public History of a National Monument* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 112.

Grim.[66] A great example of this is the space devoted to telling the story of Eliza Clinedinst Grim during and after the Battle of New Market. Following the battle she cared for wounded cadets in her home. In one text she is credited as one of "the many woman who nursed the wounded soldiers after the battle."[67] This biased approach of only incorporating the care of VMI cadets reflects the organization's commitment to interpreting the battle from the perspective of a few hundred cadets. There is no mention of Union wounded or other Confederates being cared for by other civilians after the battle.

Surprisingly the interpretation of civilian life is exclusive to the Bushong Family and Clinedist Grim. Similar to Harpers Ferry and Kernstown, New Market was a town before a battlefield. Battles effected civilians in different ways than it did soldiers and people immediately in the direction of the flow of battle. If time and effort were spent researching New Market as a town unit and incorporating this into their interpretation it would fit better into the larger proposed meta-narrative. The site also handles the post war landscape by interpreting the lives of cadets after the war. This is no effort to incorporate Jim Crow, Reconstruction or race relations following the end of the war. By devoting such attention to the Civil War in Virginia site managers need to recognize the complexities of post war Virginia. If this more inclusive narrative was approached it would be interesting to see how the public and VMI audiences would respond.

Overall the tone and viewpoint of the interpretation at New Market is from a southern perspective. More specifically, the Hall of Valor remains firmly focused on a particular

[66] The Bushong farm became a centerpiece of the Battle of New Market. The house and outbuildings are preserved today and used in many interpretive endeavors.
[67]The Virginia Museum of the Civil War, "Mother Crim," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author, November, 2014.

perspective of VMI. This viewpoint inhibits the site's ability to tell a story that moves beyond the story of the VMI cadets during the Battle of New Market. Modern scholarship needs to be incorporated to acknowledge the role of slavery in the conflict and move interpretation beyond the experiences of the VMI cadets. With this being said site managers realize the power of their site and how this power can resonate in interpretative messages. Not only does this power shape interpretation but also serves in creating a commemorative landscape.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

The site closest to the proposed meta-narrative is Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Their small orientation center at the Master Armorer's House helps lay the context for visitors to understand the important meanings of the site. Its relation to John Brown's Raid in 1859 enables the site to engage with the question of slavery and secession. The military importance of the town during the Civil War allows interpretation to talk about the various battles fought in the area. Following the end of the war with the establishment of the all black Storer College at Harpers Ferry the site has the ability to tell the story of post- Civil War America. Even with this plethora of information there is not any direction or connection for each theme to build off one another.

Visitors entering the Master Armorer's House exhibit space are greeted with professionally produced exhibit labels. One thing is clear when standing back and reading the interpretative labels. Interpretative managers have a clear sense of what messages they want visitors to take away. These messages are compartmentalized into six separate interpretative themes. During the interpretative process the voice of the labels stays on track and does not move away from these themes. Compared to other sites such as Kernstown where the subject

material moves constantly from military to social and even industrial subjects, Harpers Ferry knows what message they want to tell and they commit to it. [68]

The six themes are: natural heritage, transportation, industry, African-American History, John Brown, and the Civil War.[69] Each theme has its own devoted space in the exhibit area. As an orientation space the exhibits offer visitors a taste of what to expect before heading into the more specialized museums located in the historic town.[70] When analyzing the interpretation of John Brown's Raid, it is impossible to ignore its relation so slavery in the United States before the Civil War. John Brown's attempted revolution failed at Harpers Ferry in 1859. The exhibits should make the intrinsic connection between this and the beginning of the Civil War abundantly clear. The exhibit implicitly says that slavery was the cause of the war by looking at John Brown's actions. However the voice of the National Park Service and its commitment to explicitly stating slavery as the cause of the war is surprisingly not stated. The exhibits read in part:

> On October 16, 1859, John Brown took the sleepy town of Harpers Ferry, Virginia completely by surprise. As his first move to in a bid to end slavery. Brown ordered his followers to secure the bridges and seize the weapons and factories in Lower Town and on Virginius Island. His "army of liberation" would then campaign south using Loudoun Heights to strike deeper in slave-holding country. Lower Town became the scene of chaos and violence as towns people

[68]Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.
[69]Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.
[70]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has numerous museums dedicated to certain historical themes and topics. Each museum is separate from each other in the town's landscape and is often devoted a whole building for museum space. For the sake of continuity the author only examined the main orientation center that broadly covers all themes.

and militia cut off escape routes and engaged Brown's men. The raid ended on October 18, but the controversy had just begun.[71]

[72]

This text has many strong points. It is readable at a level the average reader can comprehend. It is not too long and the sentence structure is short. The interpretation is also appropriate because it keeps it site specific to Harpers Ferry. It is surprising that historians writing the text did not make one more final connection to the larger narrative of American history at the time, the debate on slavery. Two simple sentences following the text would have easily tied the tangible actions to larger universal themes: "The future of slavery in America reached a point of no return. The

[71]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, "John Brown's Raid," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author July 14th, 2014.
[72]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, "John Brown's Raid," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author July 14th, 2014.

nation would now turn to violence to solve the problem of slavery."[73] If done, it will be a perfect connection in the meta-narrative connecting site specific actions to larger national trends.

The interpretation of civilian life and families is mediated through the town proper. As a town first and battlefield second, Harpers Ferry has distinct advantages when it comes to interpreting the civilian experience compared to other NPS battlefield sites. Visitors see the park as a quaint 19th century mountain town nestled between two rivers and not a battlefield. But the story of Harpers Ferry during the Civil War is diverse. It strategic importance lent itself to occupation by both southern and northern forces, changing hands a total of eight times during the war.[74] In places, the interpretation is fixated on the military experience of the town and does not pay ample attention to the civilians who experienced the war. Text on the panels focus on various sieges on the town, military occupations and its role as a supply depot for Union armies late in the war. Accompanying this text are primary source documents of siege orders and contemporary images from the Civil War.

Absent from this text is an effort to incorporate the voices of women or other civilians living in Harpers Ferry during the Civil War. With a town littered with domestic cultural resource features such as homes, why wouldn't this be incorporated into the orientation center? One possible answer is that managers at the site wish to have this story told through the actual resource and not in an orientation space. This is logical as visitors may find themselves

[73] It should be noted that the author only examined the interpretation in the Master Armorer's House. A more detailed analysis of John Brown and his actions are covered in the John Brown Museum. See Paul Shackel, *Memory in Black and White,* 51-77 for an analysis of the changing meaning of the John Brown Fort throughout time.

[74]For a comprehensive narrative of Harpers Ferry during the Civil War see Dennis Frye, *A Town Under Fire: A Border Town in the American Civil War* (Harpers Ferry: Harpers Ferry Historical Association, 2012).

wandering into the dry goods store or other domestic museums before entering into the Master Armorer's House. This reflects the park's widespread layout.

The exhibit space interprets the post war landscape more than the previous two sites. Harpers Ferry does this by using the experiences of African-Americans post war as a vehicle to engage with this topic. One way this is done is to tell visitors about the creation of Storer College. Built shortly after the war above the lower town, Storer College was established to educate African-Americans and provide technical skills to survive post-war America. In many ways the experience of students at Storer College mirrored those of many other African-Americans at the time. Paul Shackel notes, "Racial tensions flared during the college's early years, and the Ku Klux Klan sometimes threatened those associated with the college."[75] The exhibit space in the Master Armorer's House contradicts this statement when the text reads, "Storer provided a safe haven for its students and a local stage for the national struggle over equal rights." African-American history is not just observed after the Civil War. There is an attempt to interpret the experiences of African-Americans before and during the Civil War.[76]

Dennis Frye noted that the exhibits engaging visitors with African-American history were established long before the orders came from Congress. He noted that he and other interpreters in the 1980s decided to embrace this history and bring it to visitors. They accomplished this goal by establishing a museum dedicated to African-American history in Harpers Ferry which is separate from the Master Armorer's House.[77] Although a worthy accomplishment, this reveals a flaw in the interpretation at Harpers Ferry. Visitors who read quickly about African-American history in

[75]Shackel, *Memory in Black and White*, 57.
[76]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, "African-American History," (museum exhibit), from photograph taken by author July 14, 2014.
[77]Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.

the orientation space may not encounter more interpretation on this topic unless they find themselves in the African-American museum. There needs to be more of an effort by management to let visitors know where to go and how to get there. A simple example of this is the Freedom Trail in Boston, Massachusetts. A red brick trail along the cobblestone street easily guides visitors from Bunker Hill to the State House taking them by all the important historic sites. Something as simple as a path along ground can be immensely successful in guiding visitors to where you want them to go. Harpers Ferry would benefit from an effort to give more direction to visitors on where to go.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park has the ability to tell many stories and create diverse meanings with an array of visitors. Its connection with John Brown's Raid allows the site to engage with slavery. The connection to slavery and the beginning of the Civil War should be made in the Master Armorer's House displays. Void of any talk of the civilian experience during the Civil War, the interpretative plan should also be supplemented with the experiences of civilians of the town. More than the other two sites, Harpers Ferry is more inclusive by attempting to embrace the African-American experience and post-war America. What needs to be done by management is to make an effort in showing visitors how to get from the Master Armorer's House to other more detailed museums.

After examining all three sites, each site presents history through the lens of their organization. As expected, Harpers Ferry engages with slavery and African-American history more than the other two sites because of the mandate by Congress. The Virginia Museum of the Civil War spends a majority of their interpretative efforts in commemorating the VMI cadets and largely ignores slavery and the civilian experience. Kernstown's lack of an overreaching theme is seen with the interpretation moving rapidly between military and social narratives. Each site has

the ability to fit into the meta-narrative of the Civil War. The incorporation of civilian experiences by widening the interpretation to include the history of the townspeople is one easy change that all three sites should consider. Shenandoah Valley Civil War historian Jonathan Noyalas noted, "battles…did not occur in some far off hinterland, but rather on people's farms, in families backyards, and in the streets of the Shenandoah Valley's communities."[78] If this can be done more adequately at each site, then visitors to each of these three sites will take away a more authentic interpretation of the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley.

[78] Jonathan Noyalas. Review of *Bloody Autumn* by Daniel Davis and Phil Greenwalt. May 7 2014. http://www.civilwarmonitor.com/book-shelf/davis-greenwalt-bloody-autumn-2014

Chapter Three: The Use of Exhibits and Museum Space

Using objects to interpret history is a powerful way to tell a story. Visitors gravitate towards objects and spend more time looking at them than reading textual information. The use of objects in a museum setting directly shapes the messages visitors take away. In assessing each site, the author was thinking about how this interpretation through objects fits into or outside of the proposed meta-narrative. Are sites using objects to interpret slavery as the cause of the Civil War? How are civilian objects and landscapes weaved into the military narrative? Are there efforts to move beyond the battlefield and have space dedicated to post-war issues? Each site will be described in detail focusing on their use of objects and museum space. Finally each site will be evaluated on how it meets or does not meet the proposed meta-narrative.

Museums have a colored and diverse history. Their transformation over time is characterized in shifts from private to public, random to contextual collections, restricted audiences to expansive audiences, static to dynamic, and from amateurs to professionalism. What began as cabinets of curiosity in Medieval Europe quickly began to change. Museums as they are known today began to appear in America at the turn of the 19th Century. Most notably, Charles Wilson's Peale's American Museum marked this transition. He began to organize objects in the museum along certain taxonomical features. During the 19th century. P.T Barnum realized the positive effects of melding entertainment with education in his American Museum that housed over 600,000 objects. By the late 19th century, the museum landscape began to be dominated by the Smithsonian Institution. Using the synoptic series, they presented objects in a way that showed progress. The emergence of World's Fairs also played into how museums collected objects, used exhibit labels, and influenced how institutions provided security for their collections. The early 20th century saw a rebirth in American colonialism. Fueled by the influx of

immigrants to the United States, museums now acted as places to educate immigrants on perceived traditional American values. Following World War II and the creation of the interstate system, the museum community saw a rise in historic house museums as families began to take advantage of the new infrastructure. It was during this time Freeman Tilden was writing his masterpiece, *Interpreting our Heritage.* His work serves as the foundation for modern day interpretation.

By the 1960s the museum world was in flux. Science and technology museums began to challenge standard museum practices by encouraging learning through interaction and exploration. Coupled with the rise of social history, all museums began to flourish by the 1970s. The National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts help create 3,200 new museums in the 1970s and 1980s. The 1990s witnessed the "culture wars.' Academic scholars were attacking the museum community criticizing that they were not reflective of America, but rather of the "master narrative." This struggle to enact agency is exemplified in the Smithsonian's handling of the Enola Gay controversy in 1995.[79] Museums became battlegrounds for different ideologies. They were trying to be many things for many people. But the question still stands, what defines a museum today in 2014?[80]

Museum studies scholars today still cannot agree on how to precisely define a museum. However according the American Alliance of Museums (America's national accrediting

[79] See Edward T. Linenthal, Tom Engelhardt eds., *History Wars: The Enola Gay and other battles for the American past* (New York: Henry and Holt Company, 1996).
[80] Warren Leon and Roy Rozenwig, *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989): 3-31; Richard H. Kohn, "History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition," *Journal of American History,* vol. 82, No. 3 (December 1995): 1036-1063. Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Marjorie Schwarzer, *Riches, Rivals, and Radicals: 100 Years of Museums in America* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 2006): 1-27.

organization of museums) stands behind core tenants that define every museum. The American Alliance of Museums states, "we may have to live with the fact that 'museum' as a concept is an intersection of many complex categories resulting in an organization that people can identify intuitively but that cannot be neatly packaged in a definition."[81] Museums should be a place that houses objects and uses them to say something powerful about the past. Collections in an effective museum will relate to their mission statement, follow standard accession, and deaccession processes. An effective museum also is a home for the stewardship and conservation of historical objects and cultural resources. The most important element of a museum is its commitment to education. Education can take many forms. This can include school group tours of the museum, interpretative programs, outreach programs, and media produced to disseminate knowledge and scholarship. The most common form of education seen at a museum is mediated through the use of exhibits and exhibit space. Museums also serve the community by creating space conducive to discussion and dialogue of all subjects, including controversy. Finally, museums should take the form of a non-profit status. As museums attempt to balance the use of technology, and figure out their future, some modern scholars argue museums do not even need objects.[82]

When analyzing museums it is imperative to begin with a discussion of their mission statements. Mission statements are written statements that guide all museum operations. They serve to direct the museums future, vision, and purpose. Effective institutions are willing to

[81]Elizabeth E. Merritt, *National Standards & Best Practices for U.S. Museums* (Washington D.C.: The American Association of Museums, 2008): 2-3; Steven Conn, *Do Museums Still Need Objects?* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010): 20-57; Kenneth Hudson, "Attempts to Define Museum," in *Representing the Nation: A Reader, Histories, Heritage and Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1999):371-379.

[82] For a discussion on what defines a museum see, American Association of Museums, "Excellence and Equity: Education and the Public Dimension of Museums," (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2008): 3-15.

change and reassess their mission statements as time moves on. The National Park Service's mission statement is as follows:

> The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.[83]

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park realizes the broad mission of the National Park Service by not only preserving the historic and natural landscape of the area, but also educating visitors on the town's history. At New Market, the Virginia Museum of the Civil War falls under the control and supervision of the Virginia Military Institute. This system administers three separate historic sites associated with the history of VMI These include the VMI Museum in Lexington, the Stonewall Jackson House in Lexington, and The Virginia Museum of the Civil War in New Market. The genesis of the mission statement at the Virginia Museum of the Civil War is grounded in their two themes. First to interpret civilian life in the Shenandoah Valley from 1858-1868. Secondly to understand the role the VMI Cadets had during the Battle of New Market.[84] This mission statement reveals itself through the museum's use of exhibit space, interpretive programs, and various other functions at the museum including the annual re-enactment of the battle. The Kernstown Visitor Center has a similar mission to that of New Market. Volunteer curators attempt to interpret the military actions during the Civil War and use the Pritchard House as a tangible link for visitors and engage them with the civilian experience in the

[83]National Park Service, "Mission Statement," http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/mission.htm, last accessed November 10, 2014.
[84]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with author, July 21, 2014.

Shenandoah Valley during the war. Even if each site is not formally designated as a museum by the American Alliance of Museums, each site offers the public similar services as traditional museums.[85]

What is distinctive in museums compared to other types of learning is their use of media, especially the exhibits. This form of media combines different types of learning such as kinetic, visual, or auditory avenues to create an interpretative opportunity. Standard exhibits will contain objects paired with some sort of description informing visitors what the object is and interpret the object for its historical qualities. As museums enter the 21st century, curators have to adjust to the problem(s) technology presents. What are appropriate uses of technology? How will technology be utilized in exhibit space? Visitors to museums today notice interactive touch screen exhibits, sensory immersion experiences, and orientation films. Standard exhibits however are still valued by curators and exhibit designers, as well as many patrons. Each of the three museums evaluated utilized the standard exhibit in one way or another.

One of the core parts of any museum is the use of objects in exhibitions. Using objects makes museums distinct in their nature and separates them from other types of learning environment. Compared to reading a monograph on a certain subject visitors can physically see and sometimes touch objects at museums. This tangible link to the past creates an atmosphere more receptive to learning and absorbing new ideas. Civil War museums are famous for their

[85] For a discussion on mission statements see, Gail Anderson, *Museum Mission Statements: Building a Distinct Identity* (Washington D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1998); Hugh H. Genoways and Lynne Ireland, *Museum Administration an Introduction* (New York: AltaMira Press, 2003): 21-24. For the sake of this research and evaluation, each site will be assessed using museum evaluation techniques. It was out of the scope of thiswork to formally designate each site as a museum. The Virginia Museum of the Civil War at New Market and Harpers Ferry National Historical Park are accredited as museums by the American Alliance of Musuems. The Kernstown Visitor Center is not.

objects. Most museums dedicated to the Civil War have numerous examples of weaponry, firearms, bullets, and artillery pieces. Civil War museums often act as sites of pilgrimage for visitors as they travel to see items related to certain soldiers, generals, or famous campaigns. In an attempt to tell a more complete narrative, museums often utilize Freeman Tilden's fifth principle: interpretation should aim to present the whole rather than the part. Small museums are famous for telling a narrative so narrow in their approach visitors will often not make the connection to the larger picture.[86]

This connection is the most important aspect of any museum. Interpretative managers and curators should utilize their collections and historic landscapes to engage with audiences with the larger questions of the meaning of the Civil War. This pedagogical theory will create connections between tangible objects and landscapes to the universal themes of the meta-narrative. Ignoring the larger questions and solely focusing on the military actions of a battle is a disservice to visitors and underestimates the public's intellect and ability to grapple with complicated ideas.

Kernstown Visitor Center

The smallest of the institutions examined in this study was the Kernstown Visitor Center. Visitors entering the Kernstown visitor center immediately see shadow boxes littered with Miníe balls, cannon pieces, and artillery shells. For visitors not familiar with the Civil War, volunteers and docents use these generic items to interpret the basic weaponry and tactics of the Civil War. Along the same lines of Miníe balls and weaponry, visitors notice what seems to be authentic Civil War uniforms. However, after a careful examination and reading of the caption labels,

[86] Examples of this in museum history are with cabinets of curiosity.

visitors learn that these uniforms are not from the 19th century. Rather, they are uniforms worn by re-enactors that are on loan. Does this make the uniforms authentic? The obvious answer is no, they were not worn from 1861-1865 during the American Civil War. From the perspective of re-enactors however, they may view them as authentic in their own eyes identifying with them along shared personal experiences.[87]

[88]

At the corner of the visitor space stands a coat rack and 19th century looking chair. After careful examination, visitors learn this space is dedicated to children. Children are encouraged to try on reproduction Confederate and Union uniforms and have their photograph taken. Across from the coat rack sits a table with reproduction firearms. Signage encourages children to pick up and pose with the weaponry. This situation has both its pros and cons. Volunteer Curator and Head of visitor center operations, Pam Pampe noted that this was an attempt to bring history alive. Children often feel disconnected when visiting traditional museums with objects placed behind the glass in cases accompanied by interpretative text. Encouraging sensory experiences

[87] For a discussion on visitor expectations on an interpretative approach to authenticity see, Suzannah Lipscomb, "Historical Authenticity and Interpretive Strategy at Hampton Court Palace," *The Public Historian* no. 3, vol. 32 (Summer 2010): 98-119; Eric Gable and Richard Handler, "After Authenticity at an American Heritage Site," *American Anthropologist* no. 3 Vol. 98, (September 2006): 568-578.

[88] Entrance to the Visitor Center on the Kernstown Battlefield. Photograph by author June, 30 2014.

she hopes will encourage learning. On the other hand however what institutional message(s) is the museum conveying by encouraging dressing up and posing with rifles? Critics to this approach claim that this presents a sanitized version of history ignoring the horrors of war.[89]

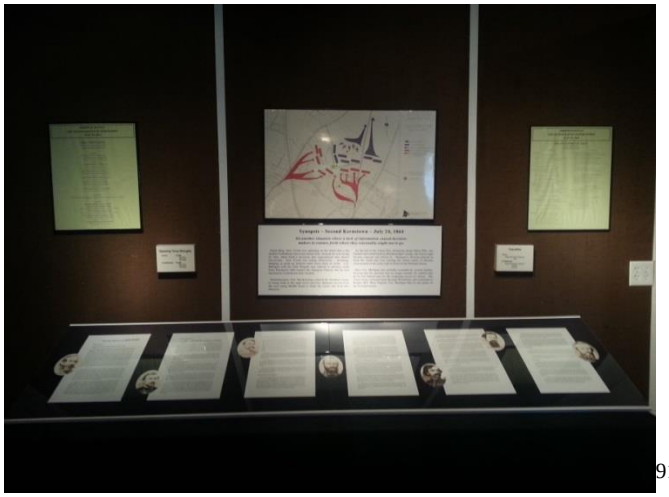
Besides weaponry, the visitor center at Kernstown contains a McClellan saddle and other artifacts taken from not only the Kernstown Battlefield but surrounding areas as well. After reading the description labels visitors learn that a majority of the items are on loan. Pam Pampe explained how crucial it was for the Kernstown Battlefield Association to maintain positive relationships with their donors in an attempt to keep their items on display. Compared to other institutions that have a collections budget this non-profit does not. They rely heavily on the gifts and donations of visitors and benefactors to fill their visitor center with objects. This is another way the structure of an organization shapes their interpretation.

Besides objects, visitors entering the Visitor Center cannot escape the massive amount of text seen on exhibit labels, interpretative panels, and orientation panels on display. There are different types of labels used for different reasons. Introductory labels provide organizational information such as a summary of the exhibit space, themes, objects, and subject matter. Group labels help visitors provide taxonomical context to the exhibit, explaining why these items are the same, different, or deserve to be shown together. Captions are detailed labels for explicit objects. Museum workers such as Beverly Serrell argue that these are the most important of all types of labels. When referencing these labels she notes, "Sometimes the only labels visitors will

[89] Pam Pampe, Volunteer Curator and head of Visitor Center services at Kernstown Battlefield Association, interview with author, June 30, 2014.

read are captions because they are usually short and next to an object. They should refer to the visible specifics-beyond just the obvious-of the objects they discuss."[90]

The Kernstown Visitor Center makes ample efforts to give visitors as much information as possible on the site's history, the Civil War, and its preservation. However, this effort takes away from a positive visitor experience. The amount of text that explains the Battle of Second Kernstown is the equivalent of a seven page essay double spaced. The historical analysis is impressive, but it is in the wrong context as visitors will not spend the necessary time reading the text. Introductory panels that provide the historical context to various campaigns contain too much wording as well. A simple reassessment of written material and streamlining written interpretation would go a long way. However lacking exhibit designers or paid museum professionals, this task is easier said than done.

 [91]

[90] Beverly Serrell, *Exhibit Labels: An Interpretative Approach* (New York: AltaMira Press, 1996): 25; An analysis of the labels voice, material, themes, and historicity was discussed in the previous chapter.

[91] Exhibit space dedicated to interpreting the Second Battle of Kernstown. Notice the six sheets of paper that narrate the battle, length of introduction text underneath map, and thelack of available interaction for visitors. Photograph by author July 2014.

When visitors enter the Kernstown Battlefield they enter on a driveway that brings them to the parking lot. From the onset, visitors are on a pre-planned track that shapes their visit and how they interact with the historic landscape and museum space. Once inside the Visitor center, museum goers can veer to the right to see exhibits, walk straight ahead to an information desk, or travel left to a research room. Space is limited inside the building. The path through the exhibits resembles a horseshoe. Once you start at one end it is hard to move freely from one exhibit to another. The Kernstown Battlefield Association is making a conscious choice to keep visitors on a prescribed path through their space.[92]

Besides the main exhibit space, there are two other spaces that deserve attention. First is the research room. The Kernstown Battlefield Association actively encourages decedents of Civil War soldiers to sit down and conduct informal research on their relatives. Numerous three-ring binders contain orders of battle, regimental rosters, and official reports. This showcases the Kernstown Battlefield Association's efforts to incorporate the public and make history more of a give and take, as opposed to a one-way didactic presentation.[93]

[92]During a site visit, the author witnessed a KBA volunteer conversing with visitors. The visitors found themselves cornered by the volunteer and unsuccessfully attempted to disconnect themselves from the situation. The organization of the space simply did not allow them to do so.
[93] Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, and New Market do not contain separate space for visitors to conduct research.

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Secondly the Kernstown Battlefield Association preserves the Pritchard-Grim House. The cultural resource stands as a memorial for the families that survived the various battles of Kernstown and as a monument for Shenandoah Valley citizens as a whole.[95] The large brick house has been restored to a condition of tentative use. During special events docents walk visitors through the house pointing out certain architectural features. The house was one of the site's first projects after obtaining the property in the early 2000s. It was through the efforts of countless volunteer hours that the structure is now in stable condition. Future plans include opening the house for site interpretation and historic house tours. There are no display cases or collections in the structure, just one interpretative wayside marker containing descriptive information.

The Visitor Center at Kernstown though small, cluttered and sometimes overwhelming, does the best with the resources available. It is the only one of the three sites that is truly free to

[94]Example of research resources available for visitors in the research room at Kernstown. Photograph by author July 2014.
[95]Pam Pampe, Volunteer Curator and head of Visitor Center services at Kernstown Battlefield Association, interview with author, June 30, 2014.

enter. Members of the association realize that changes need to be made. Pam Pampe is currently in the process of cataloging all the collections owned by the Kernstown Battlefield Association into PastPerfect. Future plans also include putting in new exhibits, engaging with online audiences, and placing replica artillery pieces on the battlefield. The first aspect of the visitor center that should be addressed is the length of text on the exhibit labels. By shortening and condensing the labels, the Kernstown Battlefield Association can significantly improve the visitor experience. With such a pristine cultural resource in the battlefield less writing would mean less time in the Visitor center and more time using the preserved landscape. Secondly, less writing may make the historical narrative more digestible for non-Civil War enthusiasts.

Virginia Museum of the Civil War

One site that attempts to do many things with their use of objects is the Virginia Museum of the Civil War. When visitors enter New Market State Historical Park they park their cars in the parking lot and immediately see a building that is reminiscent of a Civil War era drum with muskets holding it up. One of the first objects visitors see when entering the site are gravestones of VMI cadets who died during the Battle of New Market. This is just the first of many VMI related objects that visitors see that shapes their experience. Inside of this building is the Virginia Museum of the Civil War. Visitors pay a ten dollar entry fee and are invited to shop in their gift shop and wait until the next showing of their orientation movie, "Field of Lost Shoes." Visitors are also handed a brochure that guides them through the museum, battlefield, and historic

Bushong Farm. When entering the information desk area it is hard for visitors to ignore the fact that VMI is connected to museum operations.[96]

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The museum and exhibit space is inside of a two story cylinder. The top floor has a path taking visitors around the circumference of the circle with exhibits chronicling the Civil War in Virginia. Below is the bottom floor that contains objects with connections to VMI in numerous different ways. Similar to other Civil War battlefields some of the most common items are related to firearms, ammunition, and various other weapons. One of the most notable features of the museum space is the red carpet on floor. The color red is, "symbolic of the sacrifices made

[96] According to Troy Marshall the site sees nearly 30,000 visitors a year. Email with Troy D. Marshall with the author, March 2015.
[97] Entrance to the Hall of Valor at New Market. Notice the drum like building with steel supports, and white headstones of VMI cadets at the edge of the pavement. Photography by author March 2014.

on the field of battle."[98] There are two standalone exhibit cubes in the middle of the lower floor. Besides exhibits there is an overpowering din of a movie playing in the background. Voices of military commands and the grunting of cadets come from a video playing in a small seating area. The movie is about twelve minutes long and chronicles the history of VMI, tells visitors of its accolades, and shows the life experiences by cadets. The playing of this video takes away from the museum experience and distracts visitors. It is hard to concentrate or contemplate over the historical significance of objects, or read their labels with the sheer volume of this film.

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The VMI museum collections contain over 20,000 objects. Their collection is one of the best collections of Virginia and VMI related Civil War objects in the nation. The museum space

[98]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with the author, July 21, 2014.

[99] View of total exhibit space from the top floor of the Virginia Museum of the Civil War. Notice the red carpet wrapping around the top floor, and vastness of open space that allows for open movement. Photograph by author November 2014.

on the lower floor contains many of these objects with connections to VMI cadets, instructors, and alumni. The museums interpretative theme is twofold. First it is to interpret the civilian experience in the Shenandoah Valley from 1858-1868, and second to interpret the role the VMI Corps of Cadets played during the Battle of New Market. The second aspect of their interpretative theme pigeonholes the sites ability to tell a comprehensive and inclusive story regarding the 1864 Shenandoah Valley Campaign. By only focusing one small unit of the Confederate force during one engagement they ignore the Union army as a whole and the larger political implications of the military action had for the Confederate and Union governments. This creates a very narrow interpretation of the event. However when one looks at the organizational structure, and site history, founder George Collins made it very clear that this site would serve as a memorial for the VMI cadets who fought during the Battle of New Market.[100]

All of the objects displayed on the bottom floor of the museum space are of the Confederate past. Compared to the other two sites the objects here are impressive, and contain connections with popular Confederate figures. One of the most intriguing is the frock coat worn by Confederate Lt. Alexander "Sandie" Pendleton when he was mortally wounded during the Battle of Fishers Hill on September 22, 1864. Visitors can still see where the uniform frayed because of the entry wound around the neck. Other objects include items related to Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson, and various VMI related men. This includes a leather trunk owned by alum Charles Alexander Derby, who eventually served as the Colonel of the 44th Alabama and died at Antietam. One aspect in which New Market outshines the other two sites is its use of caption

[100]Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with the author, July 21, 2014. V.M.I. alum George Collins bought the property in 1940, and when he died in 1964 the *Richmond Times Dispatch* reported his will stated the site is "to be used as a trust to perpetuate and maintain as a memorial of the Battle of New Market and to place improvements thereon for educational purposes."

labels. Each object has its own label that tells of its material, who owns it, and even has its accession number on it. This aids in giving the site a sense of authenticity by conforming to standard museum practices.

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The top story of the exhibit space is a historical object in itself. In the 1960s Virginia and the United States commemorated the centennial of the American Civil War. In Virginia exhibits were put together in Richmond chronicling Virginia during the Civil War. After the centennial the dioramas used were auctioned off to museums. The Hall of Valor at New Market put in a bid and obtained the dioramas by the early 1970s. Following their accession into their collection the directors at New Market sought out someone to write exhibit labels to coincide with the

[101] Example of Confederate uniforms on display on the lower floor of the museum that are well lit and properly displayed behind glass. Photograph by author November, 2014.

dioramas. Dr. James Robertson was brought in and wrote the text to accompany the dioramas and other interpretative panels. The text and its content are an example of strong Civil War scholarship circa the 1970s. Unfortunately there has been no effort in the last forty years to update this scholarship.[102]

Visitors experiencing the top floor of exhibit space walk in a circular pattern following the Civil War in Virginia. Every twenty-five feet or so is a miniature moment in time diorama that portrays iconic scenes of Civil War battles. Accompanying these scenes is a two-three minute audio clip narrating the scene. In an age dominated by technological advances in museums, it is curious to see a site stick to a method of interpretation so antiquated. Traveling chronologically through the war, visitors get a Virginia centric interpretation of the Civil War. There are no mentions of the campaigns in the West as the interpretations commits to telling the stories of Manassas, Fredericksburg, Cold Harbor, and Appomattox Courthouse and other Virginia campaigns.

[102] Troy Marshall, Site Director at New Market State Historical Park, interview with the author, July 21, 2014.

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One of the most noteworthy uses of exhibit space, label writing, and overall placement of interpretative media is the panel on the Emancipation Proclamation. As visitors meander their way through the exhibit space there is a sudden break. Recessed in the wall is a tall panel with a picture of Abraham Lincoln and a fifty-six word paragraph on the Emancipation Proclamation. This is the museums only effort to include the story of African-Americans in their exhibit space. It is easy for visitors as they pass through the space to miss reading an exhibit that arguably describes the most significant outcome of the Civil War.[104] Space is void of any images of African Americans striving for freedom during and after the Civil War. The space also omits the

[103]Example of an exhibit on the top floor of exhibit space at New Market. Image shows example of diorama with speaker apparatus above. Photograph by author November 2014.
[104]The text on the label reads, "Lee's setback at Antietam had prompted Lincoln to use the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which was to take effect January 1, 1863. It proposed to free slaves in Confederate held territory. Britain and France, on the verge of recognizing the Confederacy, were now compelled by public opinion to withhold active support. The South's Hope for foreign aid-and victory-dimmed permanently."

creation and utilization of United States Colored Troops by Union armies.[105] The small amount of text on the Emancipation Proclamation reinforces the museums dedication to the military actions of white southerners who fought in Virginia especially at New Market.[106]

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The treatment of the story of the VMI cadets through the use of objects and labels deserves attention. The corps of VMI cadets at the Battle of New Market numbered 257 soldiers which equals roughly 6% of the total Confederate force and 2% of all the soldiers at New Market.[108] Nerveless the majority of the interpretation on the bottom floor has to do with these cadets and their experiences at New Market. Terms such as honor, sacrifice, and valor occupy

[105]All three sites do not interpret USCTs during the Civil War.
[106] To their credit, Troy Marshall mentioned that there are future plans to incorporate recessed space in better ways, create a more juxtaposed flow through the museum, and become more inclusive in their interpretation. At the time of this research, this has not been done.
[107] Interpretative panel set back from other panels focusing on the Emancipation Proclamation. Notice how far removed it is from the other exhibits.
[108] Confederate forces commanded by Major General John C. Breckenridge numbered approximately 4,090. Union forces engaged by Major General Franz Sigel numbered 10,365. See Charles Knight, *Valley Thunder: The Battle of New Market and the Opening of the Shenandoah Campaign, May 1864* (El Dorado Hills: Savas Beatie, 2010).

interpretative titles and labels. What makes these 257 cadets so extraordinary to warrant this much attention in interpretation? It goes back to the organizational structure of the site. Preservation of the New Market Battlefield would not have been possible if it were not for the efforts of VMI alum George Collins and his purchase of the property. In his own words this site will act as a "memorial" for the New Market cadets. What this creates is an atmosphere where historical interpretation is biased towards a positive image of VMI affiliated figures and lacks critical interpretation. To ensure funding from VMI, Marshall mentioned that he has to walk a "fine line" in his approach to interpretation. Certain people connected with VMI, especially alumni donors want to see their money spent in certain ways. This relationship between donors and the museum management causes interpretation to create martyrs of the Corps of Cadets at New Market. These men were no more exceptional than their southern counterparts or Union enemies. What made their wounding or death on the battlefield more distinctive than others? In fact often cadets were part of the elite antebellum society of white southerners who could afford a higher education for their sons. By including so much interpretation on such a small number of men the Virginia Museum of the Civil War ignores the complicated history of class and race and perpetuates the commemoration of the "Lost Cause."

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Outside of the museum exhibit space is a manicured historical landscape, the battlefield itself. Park staff members take great care of the historic and cultural resources. A tourist traversing the battlefield will find it as easy as any famous Civil War battlefield to tour. Wide park roads line the battlefield taking people to key spots. Signs clearly mark where to stop, interpretative waysides provide site interpretation, and hiking trails crisscross the landscape allowing for personal exploration of the battlefield. Numerous monuments create a commemorative landscape for Civil War units. Compared to the other institutions, management at New Market creates a battlefield space that is highly accessible for visitors.

The Virginia Museum of the Civil War in New Market uses their exhibit space, objects, and interpretative labels to tell a very specific story. Interpretative efforts emphasize the role the Corps of Cadets played during the Battle of New Market, and ignore the larger political, social,

[109]Exhibit space on the bottom floor that focuses on the "sacrifice" and "honor" of the V.M.I. Cadets during the Battle of New Market. Photograph by author November 2014.

and economic implications of the Civil War. Creating a space that is more inclusive and acknowledges different perspectives would encourage a more diverse visitor base. From a curatorial perspective objects are presented in a professional manner and are conserved properly. The use of captivating Confederate objects is a reason to visit the site alone. The historical context that is constructed around these objects needs to be re-evaluated.

Master Armorer's House

In the Lower Town in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park stands numerous 19th century buildings for park use. What was once the Master Armorers House in the 19th century now serves as an orientation center for visitors traveling to Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The space is dedicated to orienting visitors to the historical significance of Harpers Ferry, and introducing their major interpretative themes. Compared to the previous two sites, Harpers Ferry National Historical experiences the largest amount of visitors per year.[110] A majority of visitors however may miss this crucial space in their visit.[111]

When visitors arrive at Harpers Ferry they do not immediately enter the Lower Town. Once a ten dollar fee is paid visitors park their vehicles and make their way to the visitor center. This visitor center serves as a visitor orientation center. It is void of objects and extensive exhibits. It provides visitors with information on how to get to the Lower Town. Visitors wait for shuttle busses to bring them to the Lower Town. Visitors arrive in the Lower Town and are free to explore the space as they please. Historic buildings containing various museums and exhibit

[110]Harpers Ferry National Historical Park accommodates nearly 250,000 visitors a year. "Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Resource Assessment," National Parks Conservation Association (Washington D.C.: February, 2009). http://www.npca.org/about-us/center-for-park-research/stateoftheparks/harpers_ferry/HAFE-web.pdf

[111] Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.

space line the cobblestone streets. The previous two sites manipulated their space for visitors to enter and experience certain features in a prescribed way. Harpers Ferry makes no effort to guide visitors down a specific path. If visitors are not looking for the information center; they may not know it even exists. For a space that is designed to orient visitors to the park it would be better utilized by visitors if it the bus stopped closer to the Master Armorers House.[112]

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When visitors do find the building marked by a NPS flag and information sign outside the structure they enter a historic house that is revamped for park use. To their immediate right stands a room reserved for an information desk. Either park staff or volunteers aid in greeting

[112] For a study on resource use at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park see, Thomas, J. E., J. P. Campbell, S. D. Costanzo, W. C. Dennison, M. Lehman, D. Nisbet, M. Nortrup, and M.Parsons. 2013. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park natural resource condition assessment: National Capital Region. Natural Resource Report NPS/HAFE/NRR—2013/746. National Park Service, Fort Collins: 11. http://ian.umces.edu/pdfs/ian_report_437.pdf.

[113] View of the Information Center housed in the Masters Armorers House. Photograph by author July 14, 2014.

visitors and giving them the necessary literature and information they need during their time at the park.[114] Guests are encouraged to spend time exploring the exhibit space across the hallway to orient themselves to the history of Harpers Ferry before navigating through the maze of museums in the lower town. After walking across the hallway it is clear the room across the information desk is designated for exhibit space, and nothing else.[115]

The NPS exhibits on display are produced differently than those of the previous institutions. The Harpers Ferry Center (different and apart from Harpers Ferry National Historical Park) is a NPS wide multimedia production site. Staffers produce literature and media for all NPS parks around the country, including Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. The Harpers Ferry Center works with staff from parks to produce park brochures, orientation movies, interpretative waysides, graphic identities, and exhibits.[116] Run by museum professionals, and exhibit designers, each undertaking projects professionalism.

It is clear that exhibit designers understood what they wanted visitors to take away from their experience in this space. One of the first panels seen in the exhibit space serves to orient visitors to what they will see:

> In this room you will get a brief overview of six stories: Natural Heritage, Transportation, Industry, African-American History, John Brown and the Civil War. These stories weave through the unique saga of Harpers Ferry. The connection between these stories provides the key to understanding Harpers Ferry's place in history.[117]

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[114] This includes park brochures, hiking trail maps, and NPS Junior Ranger materials.
[115] Visitors to the park at this point in their stay have already paid the necessary ten dollar entry fee to park their vehicles away from the lower town at the Visitor Center.
[116] For more information on the services offered to parks from HFC; http://www.nps.gov/hfc/
[117]Exhibit Label, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Information Center at the Masters Armorer's House. July 14, 2014.

This orientation label is useful for visitors to recognize and become familiar with the interpretative themes before actually seeing the exhibits proper. By framing their interpretation around six key themes, exhibit designers consciously chose what they thought to be the most important topics to understand.

Each topic, whether it is John Brown or Industry, has its own dedicated area and interpretative panels. Each topic has two separate spaces in the exhibit room to tell their story. The first group of panels only consists of six interpretative panels. Each panel orients visitors to the importance of the theme and how it plays out in Harpers Ferry. When analyzing each panel, it is evident that a certain design was sought for. All the top title labels cohere to the same typeface and size, allowing for continuity from panel to panel. Each panel contains a small concisely written paragraph that gives just enough information for an overall understanding. Again the typeface and size of these introductory labels give the panel's consistency from one panel to another. Lastly, each panel is similar through their use of historical images, and visual aids. Located on the top and bottom of the small interpretive text, the visual aids literally frame the text. Exhibit designers hope that people's eyes looking at the top image will catch the interpretative text as they move towards the bottom set of images. A select few of these panels also have glass cases at their base containing historical objects. At the bottom of the Civil War panel stands Civil War accoutrements such as a canteen and firearms.[118]

[118] Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.

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The second set of interpretative panels build off of the previous knowledge gained from the orientation panels.They contain more text, images, and move from a broad interpretive emphasis towards a specific focus. Also when compared to their counterparts this space includes more historical objects. The panels on each interpretative theme are physically larger than the orientation panels naturally taking up more room. A positive feature of these panels is that designers did not write longer historical narratives in their text. The text is just as concise, if not shorter than the orientation panel. Interpretative efforts are guided towards the use of objects, historical images, maps, and hands-on experiences.[120]

[119]Example of one of the first set of six interpretative panels seen in the space. Notice the use of images, text, and typeface. Photograph from author, July 2014.
[120] Dennis Frye, Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, interview with author, July 14, 2014.

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Located at foot level in the space are large historical objects that encourage visitors, especially children to touch, interact, and use their senses to experience history. The staff at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park is actively seeking out to create an inclusive learning space. This is seen by their efforts to appeal to all learning types: visual through the use of images, kinetic through the use of hands on objects, and verbal with interpretative text. Compared to the other two sites Harpers Ferry offers the most diverse learning experience for their visitors.

[121] Building off of previous panels, the second set of interpretative panels offer more specifics to the larger interpretative themes outlined previously. Notice the lack of interpretative text, and use of historical images, maps, and images. Photograph by author July 14, 2014.

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With so much information available for visitors to digest park staff might be attempting to tell a story that is too comprehensive and inclusive. Are visitors critically grasping with each interpretative topic? This is unknown. But the attempt to tell all these stories represents the organizational structure of the National Park Service. The National Park Service has more fiscal and professional resources available than a non-profit or state run institution. The budget for Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in 2008 was 6.25 million dollars alone.[123] These funds can be used to create museum quality exhibits by professionals. The Masters Armorer's House reflects these abilities.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park acknowledges that they cannot appropriately tell a holistic version of each interpretive theme in this information center. Therefore throughout the cultural and historic landscape of the Lower Town are museums dedicated to certain subjects. By doing so this enables visitors to explore the subjects deeper, after being oriented at the

[122] Historical objects placed at eye level for children encourage them to "examine closely." Not being housed behind a glass case encourages touching and sensory interpretive opportunities. Photograph from author July 2014.
[123]National Parks Conservation Association, *Harpers Ferry National Historical Park: A Resource Assessment*, (Washington D.C., February 2009): 26. http://www.npca.org/about-us/center-for-park-research/stateoftheparks/harpers_ferry/HAFE-web.pdf.

information center. Museums are housed in historical buildings outfitted for reuse creating a sense of authenticity for visitors entering the separate exhibit space. This "sense" of history the Lower Town creates through its physical presence of historical buildings, cobblestone streets, and costumed interpreters immerses visitors in a "feeling" of history.[124]

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Each of the three sites examined tells similar yet very different stories through their exhibit space, use of objects, and interpretive labels. Visitors who visit all three sites during their time in the Shenandoah Valley would get a varied view of Civil War history. Each site has the staple of what the public perceives a Civil War museum "should" have firearms and ammunition. Scholars of the Civil War would have problems with these sites as they omit slavery as the cause of the War, emancipation, the civilian experience and the post war landscape.

[124] Authors have argued that the interpretation at the site overall is representative of "Lost Cause" narratives. See John D. Bohland, "A Lost Cause Found: Vestiges of Old South Memory in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia" (PhD dissertation, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, 2006), 187-201.

[125]The Civil War Museum in Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Notice how it resembles the historic fabric of the town, has a brick façade, and is separate from the information center. Photograph by author July 2014.

Management at the Kernstown Battlefield Association does the best that they can do with staffing and financial resources. It is the most democratic of all three sites because it does not charge visitors entering the site. Their use of objects does not fit into the proposed meta-narrative. Exhibits and museum space ignore that there even was a cause to the war. Using objects to engage with the secession crisis and slavery would connect the military actions to the larger narrative of the Civil War. The site is missing an enormous opportunity to interpret slavery and its connection to the start of the Civil War with their passive use of the Pritchard-Grim. Were there slaves living here? What were their lives like? The site attempts to use the house as a tangible link to civilian life during and after the Civil War. The Kernstown Battlefield Association is in an extraordinary position. As Civil War scholarship pushes sites to move beyond the battlefield they are equipped with the cultural resources to do that. The Pritchard-Grim House can be used to connect site history to the meta-narrative of the post war landscape and civilian life. As time moves on and more funding is granted hopefully curators and interpreters can create a landscape that embraces the complexities of the Civil War in the Shenandoah Valley.

Curators and interpretative managers at New Market have certain messages they want their exhibits to portray and they commit to these messages throughout. No question the objects housed at New Market are some of the most first-rate Confederate objects in Virginia. The use of museum space as a whole at the Virginia Museum of the Civil War however does not fit into the proposed framework of the meta-narrative. There is not dedicated space devoted to critically engaging with slavery in Virginia, its relation to New Market, or the secession crisis. Today, scholars argue the Civil War was about slavery and its unknown future in America. Having a museum dedicated to narrating the Civil War in Virginia that ignores slavery is inappropriate.

Similar to the Kernstown Battlefield Association the New Market Battlefield has an antebellum home that can be used to interpret civilian life aiding in conforming to the meta-narrative. It was outside of this research to examine and analyze the sites interpretation at this property. The museum itself devotes time to interpreting the civilian and female experiences during the war by looking at women associated with the battle and the New Market cadets. There are clothing pieces from Eliza Clinedinst who tended to wounded cadets. The interpretation of women and civilians is through the perspective of military actions. It is interesting to see how the site uses space to interpret the post war landscape. Conforming to their dedication in creating a memorial for cadets the site actively creates a commemorative landscape. This landscape reinforces ideals and ideas presented in the museum space. An example of this are the gravestones of cadets who died at New Market placed in front of the entrance to the museum. The gift shop as well is littered with items and paraphernalia that corroborates with their efforts to martyrize these cadets. Their inability to grapple with the complexities of the post-war American landscape and race relations is unsustainable in the 21st century.

The space and objects in the Masters Armorers House at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park fits closely to the proposed meta-narrative but still falls short of completely integrating its ideas. Having the ability to interpret John Brown and use his artifacts as objects allows interpretation to talk about the cause of the Civil War. As mentioned in the previous chapter however the site alludes to slavery as the cause of the war but does not make the final connection. Civilian and female experiences are again interpreted under the umbrella of warfare. As a town first it was surprising not see curators use objects from the town proper to bring more personal stories into their interpretation. The site falls short in this area. Where the museum does a better job than the rest of the other sites is its commitment to interpreting the post-war

landscape. Curators use the creation of Storer College as a link to race relations, Jim Crow America and racism. It was a pleasure to see objects from the school such as hats and slate boards. The framework of the meta-narrative is in place at Harpers Ferry. Two changes can be made to move the museum space towards the meta-narrative. More attention to emphasizing slavery as the root cause of the Civil War and not John Brown, and including objects from civilians and women of Harpers Ferry during the war.

Barring their differences from organizational size, variances in staffing, interpretative messages and funding discrepancies, each site has element in common. That is the preservation of land that was fought over during the American Civil War. When looking at motivations to create each site, all were based with the idea of battlefield preservation. The mid-20th century saw a rise in the use of automobiles and emergence of a national infrastructure system. It was easier than ever for workers to live further from their workplace. This lead to the rise of suburbs and the blending of urban and rural landscapes. The Shenandoah Valley saw a rise in commuters living in the Valley but working outside of its geographical boundaries. In response preservation organizations at New Market and other Civil War battlefields saw a threat to battlefields. In order to preserve these landscapes coalitions and funds were raised to purchase real estate associated with the Civil War. Often discussions of museum objects are centered with those housed in collections or behind exhibit cases. In the context of these three sites the most important objects are the battlefields themselves.

Above all the most significant and paramount responsibility of these organizations is the preservation cultural landscapes and battlefield land. Visitors can see Civil War firearms at countless museums across the country. There is something special and powerful when people can stand on the ground and be physically attached to a historical landscape. If these battlefields are

lost another tangible connection to the lives of past people will be lost forever. Preservation and conservation should be the primary concern of all three sites. Without preservation efforts the interpretation in Visitor Centers would be inconsequential and foreign to visitors.[126]

[126] For a discussion on the relationship between city and country see, William Cronon, *Natures Metropolis Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992); The history of suburbs are covered succinctly in, Doleres Hayden, B*uilding Suburbs: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820-2000* (New York: Knopf Publishing, 2003): 21-70.

Final Thoughts

Civil War interpretation at battlefields is not as clear cut as it seems. There are numerous factors that go into what and how historical information is presented. Who is the person making the final decisions? What are their biases or goals? How is the organization structured? What is the history of the site itself? The answers to these questions are different at each site. But the answers to these questions provide public historians with insights into how interpretation is crafted, created and presented to the public.

Public historians need to look more closely at the factors that create interpretation at Civil War battlefields. Too often public historians are quick to criticize interpretation that does not meet current academic consensus and their professional standards. Public historians need to peel back the layers of an organization and understand how and why it was created. It is difficult for sites to escape their built in biases. With this historical context the logic behind many interpretative methods at sites become clearer. Also by understanding this organizational structure public historians can offer better recommendations and insights for changes in future interpretation.

Changes need to be made at each site to fit into the proposed meta-narrative. Not one site properly examines and illuminates slavery as the cause of the Civil War, incorporates women and the civilian experience or lays out the complexities of the post-war landscape. Realistically it is easier said than done to implement these changes fully. But there are ways that these sites can attempt to do this in the future. One way is to reach out to nearby colleges and universities and build relationships with respective history and public history faculty. This option has two benefits. Sites can build positive relationships with professionally trained public historians. Sites

can also learn about recent scholarship and where the field is headed. By building these relationships students from school studying public history can intern or work part time at the site. Sites can use these students as interns and do the research needed to create a more inclusive museum setting. The Kernstown Battlefield Association could use a student to research Kernstown as a village or the Prithcard-Grim House in hopes of using this information for future interpretation. Students on the other hand would gain crucial work experience to build their resumes. Harpers Ferry National Historical Park uses this system extensively as it employs numerous students and interns during the summer months.

The idea behind presenting a meta-narrative, where site specific interpretation connects with larger national trends had two benefits. First, it helps place site interpretation into a larger context following the guidelines laid out by Freeman Tilden in his six principles. It is proper historical interpretation practice. Second, by creating an area where interpretation is more inclusive in nature, theoretically the site can attract a more diverse audience. Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley need to take this approach and apply it to their museum settings. By moving beyond the interpretation of battlefield tactics, each site will appeal to a wider range of potential visitors and engage current visitors on additional levels. By casting a wider net, non-profit sites can show their utility to a larger percentage of the public. If Civil War sites in the Shenandoah Valley do not engage in a more inclusive interpretation of the Civil War they will not exist in the future.

They also need to take this approach and reach out to the burgeoning online audiences. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube are all convenient ways to reach a wider audience. Beyond social media, sites should have websites heavy with historical content enabling the public who are not able to visit in person to reap the benefits of

battlefield preservation. Civil War sites with a small staff and low budget may find this challenging. As museums enter the 21st century, it is imperative they utilize online technology to reach their audiences in some way. Public historians should be aware of how historic sites can most effectively utilize new media.

Finally I believe a region wide organization should be established to promote cooperation and best practices at the Shenandoah Valley historical sites. Hypothetically, this network would be called, "Shenandoah Valley Public Historians." The idea behind this is for public historians working at all historic sites in the Shenandoah Valley to belong to a professional network. This network would break down barriers and be a comprehensive group of public historians, not just those working at Civil War related sites. The Shenandoah Valley is rich with culture and history beyond the Civil War. Practitioners of living history could interact with curators at art museums. Park Rangers could trade ideas with cultural resource specialists. Education specialists could seek input from archivists with possible education materials. Public history is and should be collaborative and is meant to bring the public to the table about conversations on the past. Too often sites are too concerned with what their specific site and management teams are doing. Relationships and networking are ideal environments to create new ideas and form new partnerships.

Efforts have been made by history faculty at James Madison University to collaborate with historians specializing in Shenandoah Valley History. The Shenandoah Valley Regional Studies seminar "is intended to give scholars at colleges, universities, museums, libraries, and other institutions a regular forum at which to consider topics of regional interest, pertinent, but

not restricted, to the Shenandoah Valley."[127] Held once a month at JMU's campus this enables scholars to share and debate ideas. This model works for "academia." What the author wants is to build off this model and create a larger more inclusive network of interpreters, curators, preservationists, education specialists and managers of historic sites in the Shenandoah Valley. Each year the "Shenandoah Valley Public Historians" would hold an annual conference in the Shenandoah Valley. This would provide members the opportunity to present scholarly papers on original research pertaining to public history issues in their field. This conference would also be a great networking opportunity to share ideas and build relationships for the future. Traditional scholars of Shenandoah Valley history would be invited as well to share new historical research with their public history cohorts. Efforts of this nature have proven effective in the past. In 2013 Gettysburg College hosted a three day conference, "Looking Past the 150th: The Future of Civil War History." In this setting traditional academics spoke alongside public history professionals in the field. Walls between disciplines were brought down and meaningful dialogue was had across professions.

Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley are a portal to the past. The ground was contested by armed men during the Civil War. These landscapes still are contested today. Interpreters, board members, volunteers and historians alike argue about whose stories should be told. How should these stories be told? These are healthy discussions to have. Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley need to use these portals into the past to tell the stories of not only soldiers but civilians, enslaved communities, women and move interpretation beyond the battlefield. Interpretation in visitor centers and museums is an effective way to begin the conversation about the Civil War. Effective interpretation is grounded in the commitment to

[127] http://www.jmu.edu/history/programs/public-valley.shtml. Last accessed March 11, 2015.

engage audiences with complex ideas and show the nuances of history. This interpretative pedagogy should be at the center of all Civil War battlefields in the Shenandoah Valley.

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Chapter Two

Interviews:

Dennis Frye. Chief Historian at Harpers Ferry National Historical Park.Interview with author. July 14th, 2014.

Pam Pampe. Volunteer Curator and head of Visitor center Services at Kernstown Battlefield Association. Interview with author, June 30th, 2014.

Troy Marshall. Site Director at New Market State Historical Park.Interview with the author, July 21st, 2014.

All images are photographs taken by author during site visits.

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Chapter Three

Personal Interviews:

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